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Antinomianism Unmasked:
BEING AN
INQUIRY
INTO THE
DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE TWO
DISPENSATIONS
OF
Law and Grace.

BY
SAMUEL CHASE, A. M.

WITH A PREFACE,
BY THE REV. ROBERT HALL, A. M.

This is a faithful saying; and these things I will that thou affirm constantly; that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.—TITUS iii. 8.

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1819.

Authoritative Statement

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INQUIRY

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DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

OF THE TWO

DISPENSATIONS



And the Grace

BY

SAMUEL CHASE, A.M.

WITH A PREFACE

BY THE REV. ROBERT HALL, A.M.

This is a curious saying, and these things I will show them often constantly - that they which have called - God might be coming to them in great number - I have things in my hand and in my hand with me - I will show it.

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PREFACE.

IT is with considerable reluctance that I have complied with the request of the highly-esteemed Author of the following work, by prefixing a short Preface; not from the slightest hesitation respecting the excellence of the work itself, but from an aversion to the seeming arrogance of pretending to recommend what might rest so securely on its own merits. The Reader, if I am not greatly mistaken, will find in this Treatise a chain of close and cogent reasoning from the oracles of God, sufficient to overturn from its foundation the principles which compose the Antinomian heresy; which, he will be at no loss to perceive, are as much opposed to the *grace*, as to the authority, of the great Head of the Church.

The fundamental tenet of the system to which this Treatise is opposed, consists in the denial of

the *obligation* of believers to obey the precepts of Christ, in supposing that their interest in the merits of the Redeemer releases them from all subjection to his authority; and, as it is acknowledged on all hands, that he is the sole Lord of the Christian dispensation, the immediate consequence is, that, as far *they* are concerned, the moral government of the Deity is annihilated; that they have ceased to be accountable creatures. But this involves the total subversion of religion: for what idea can we form of a religion in which all the obligations of piety and morality are done away; in which nothing is binding, or imperative on the conscience? We may conceive of a religious code under all the possible gradations of laxness or severity, of its demanding more or less, or of its enforcing its injunctions by penalties more or less formidable: but to form a conception of a system deserving the name of religion, which prescribes no duties whatever, and is enforced by no sanctions, seems an impossibility. On this account, it appears to me improper to speak of Antinomianism as a *religious* error: religion, whether true or false, has nothing to do with it: it is rather to be considered as an

attempt to substitute a system of subtle and specious impiety in the room of Christianity. In their own estimation, its disciples are a privileged class, who dwell in a secluded region of unshaken security, and lawless liberty, while the rest of the christian world are the vassals of legal bondage, toiling in darkness and in chains. Hence, whatever diversity of character they may display in other respects, a haughty and bitter disdain of every other class of professors is a universal feature. Contempt and hatred of the most devout and enlightened Christians out of their own pale, seems one of the most essential elements of their being; nor were the ancient Pharisees ever more notorious for "trusting in themselves that they were righteous, and despising others."

Of the force of legitimate argument they seem to have little or no perception, having contracted an inveterate, and pernicious habit, of shutting their eyes against the plainest and most pointed declarations of the word of God. The only attempt they make to support their miserable system, is to adduce a number of detached and insulated passages of scripture, forcibly torn from

their context, and interpreted with more regard to their sound, than to their meaning, as ascertained by the laws of sober criticism. Could they be prevailed upon to engage in serious dispassionate controversy, some hope might be indulged of reclaiming them; their errors would admit of an easy confutation: but the misfortune is, they seem to feel themselves as much released from the restraints of reason, as of moral obligation; and the intoxication of spiritual pride has incomparably more influence in forming their persuasions than the light of evidence.

As far as they are concerned, my expectation of benefit from the following Treatise is far from being sanguine. To others, however, who may be in danger of falling a prey to their seduction, it may prove an important preservative; to the young and inexperienced, it will hold out a faithful warning, by unmasking the deformity, and revealing the danger, of that pretended doctrine of grace, which is employed to annul the obligation of obedience. They will learn from this Treatise, that the authority of Christ as Legislator, is perfectly compatible with his office as the Redeemer,

of his people; that the renewal of the soul in true holiness, forms a principal part of the salvation he came to bestow; that the privileges of the evangelical dispensation are inseparably combined with its duties; and that every hope of eternal life is necessarily presumptuous and unfounded, which is not connected with "keeping the commandments of God." They will perceive the beautiful analogy subsisting between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensation, and that the redemption wrought out upon the cross is just as subservient to the spiritual dominion of Christ over his people, as was the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt to the erection of a theocracy in the Holy Land: in a word, they will plainly see that the regal authority of Christ over his Church belongs to the very essence of the evangelical economy, considered as an annunciation of the *Kingdom, or Reign of God*.

To trace the progress of Antinomianism, and investigate the steps by which it has gradually attained its fearful ascendancy, though an interesting inquiry, would lead me far beyond the limits of this Preface. Suffice it to suggest a

few circumstances which appear to me to have contributed not a little to that result. When religious parties have been long formed, a certain technical phraseology, invented in order to designate the peculiarities of the respective systems, naturally grows up: what custom has sanctioned, in process of time becomes law, and the slightest deviation from the consecrated diction comes to be viewed with suspicion and alarm. Now the technical language appropriated to the expression of the Calvinistic system in its nicer shades, however justifiable in itself, has, by its perpetual recurrence, narrowed the vocabulary of religion, and rendered obsolete many modes of expression which the sacred writers indulge without scruple. The latitude with which they express themselves on various subjects has been gradually relinquished, a scrupulous and systematic cast of diction has succeeded to the manly freedom and noble negligence they are accustomed to display; and many expressions employed without hesitation in scripture, are rarely found, except in the direct form of quotation, in the mouth of a modern Calvinist.

In addition to this, nothing is more usual than

for the zealous abettors of a system, with the best intentions, to magnify the importance of its peculiar tenets by hyperbolical exaggerations, calculated to identify them with the fundamental articles of faith. Thus the Calvinistic doctrines have often been denominated, by divines of deservedly high reputation, *the doctrines of grace*; implying, not merely their truth, but that they constitute the very essence and marrow of the gospel. Hence persons of little reflection have been tempted to conclude, that the zealous inculcation of these comprehends nearly the whole system of revealed truth, or as much of it at least as is of vital importance, and that no danger whatever can result from giving them the greatest possible prominence. But the transition from a partial exhibition of truth to the adoption of positive error is a most natural one, and he who commences with consigning certain important doctrines to oblivion, will generally end in perverting or denying them. The authority of the laws of Christ, his proper dominion over his people, and the absolute necessity of evangelical obedience in order to eternal life, though perfectly consistent in my apprehension with Cal-

vinism, form no part of it, considered as a separate system. In the systematic mode of instruction they are consequently omitted, or so slightly and sparingly adverted to, that they are gradually lost sight of, and when they are presented to the attention, being supported by no habitual mental associations, they wear the features of a strange and exotic character. They are repelled with disgust and suspicion, not because they are perceived to be at variance with the dictates of inspiration, their agreement with which may be immediately obvious; but purely because they deviate from the trains of thought which the hearer is accustomed to pursue with complacency. It is purely an affair of taste, it is neither the opposition of reason, or of conscience, which is concerned, but the mere operation of antipathy.

The paucity of practical instruction, the practice of dwelling almost exclusively in the exercise of the ministry on doctrinal and experimental topics, with a sparing inculcation of the precepts of Christ, and the duties of morality, is abundantly sufficient, without the slightest admixture of error, to produce the effect of which we are

speaking; nor is it to be doubted that even holy and exemplary men have by these means paved the way for Antinomianism. When they have found it necessary to advert to points of morality, and to urge them on scriptural motives, the difference between these, and their usual strain of instruction, has produced a sort of mental revulsion. Conscious, meanwhile, that they have taught nothing but the pure and uncorrupted word of God, have inculcated no doctrine but what appears to be sustained by the fair interpretation of that word, they are astonished at perceiving the eager impetuosity with which a part of their hearers rush into Antinomian excesses; when a thorough investigation might convince them, that though they have inculcated truth, it has not been altogether "as it is in Jesus;" that many awakening and alarming considerations familiar to the scriptures have been neglected, much of their pungent and practical appeal to the conscience suppressed, and a profusion of cordials and stimulants administered, where cathartics were required.

In the New Testament the absolute subser-

viency of doctrinal statements to the formation of the principles and habits of practical piety is never lost sight of: we are continually reminded that obedience is the end of all knowledge and of all religious impressions. But the tendency, it is to be feared, of much popular and orthodox instruction, is to bestow on the belief of certain doctrines, combined with strong religious emotion, the importance of an ultimate object, to the neglect of that great principle, that "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." While it is but candid to suppose that some are beguiled through the "good words and fair speeches," by which the apostles of Antinomianism recommend themselves to the unlearned and unstable, it can scarce be doubted that they are chiefly indebted for their success to the aversion which many feel to Christianity as a *practical* system. Divest it of its precepts and its sanctions, represent it as a mere charter of privileges, a provision for investing a certain class with a title to eternal life, independent of every moral discrimination, and it will be eagerly embraced; but it will not be the religion of the New Testament: it will not be the religion

of him who closed his sermon on the Mount by reminding his hearers, that he who "heareth his sayings and doth them not, shall be likened to a man who built his house upon the sand, and the storm came, and the rains descended, and the winds blew, and beat on that house, and it fell, because it was founded upon the sand."

The most effectual antidote to the leaven of Antinomianism will probably be found in the frequent and earnest inculcation of the practical precepts of the gospel, in an accurate delineation of the christian temper, in a specific and minute exposition of the personal social and relative duties, enforced at one time by the endearing, at another by the alarming motives which revelation abundantly suggests. To overlook the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel under the pretence of advancing the interests of morality, is one extreme; to inculcate those doctrines, without habitually adverting to their purifying and transforming influence, is another, not less dangerous. If the first involves the folly of attempting to rear a structure without a foundation, the latter leaves it naked and useless.

A large infusion of practical instruction may be expected to operate as an alterative in the moral constitution. Without displacing a single article from the established creed, without modifying or changing the minutest particle of speculative belief, it will generate a habit of contemplating religion in its true character, as a system of moral government, as a wise and gracious provision for re-establishing the dominion of God in the heart of an apostate creature. Though there must unquestionably be a perfect agreement betwixt all revealed truths, because truth is ever consistent with itself, yet they are not all adapted to produce the same immediate impression. They contribute to the same ultimate object, "the perfecting the man of God," by opposite tendencies; and while some are immediately adapted to inspire confidence and joy, others are fitted to produce vigilance and fear; like different species of diet, which may in their turn be equally conducive to health, though their action on the system be dissimilar. Hence it is of great importance, not merely that the doctrine that is taught be sound and scriptural, but that the proportion maintained betwixt the various articles of reli-

gious instruction coincide, as far as possible, with the inspired model, that each doctrine occupy its proper place in the scale, that the whole counsel of God be unfolded, and no one part of revealed truth be presented with a frequency and prominence which shall cast the others into shade. The progress of Antinomianism, if I am not greatly mistaken, may be ascribed in a great measure to the neglect of these precautions, to an intemperate and almost exclusive inculcation of doctrinal points.

Even when the necessity of an exemplary conduct is enforced upon Christians, an attentive and intelligent hearer will frequently perceive a manifest difference between the motives by which it is urged, and those which are presented by the inspired writers. The latter are not afraid of reminding every description of professors without exception, that "if they live after the flesh they shall die," and that they will then only "be partakers of Christ, if they hold fast the beginning of their confidence, and rejoicing of their hope firm unto the end:" while too many content themselves with insisting on considerations, which, whatever

weight they may possess on a devout and tender spirit, it is the first effect of sinful indulgence to impair. Of this nature is the menace of spiritual desertion, darkness, absence of religious consolation, and other spiritual evils, which will always be found to be less alarming, just in proportion to the degree of religious declension. To combat the moral distempers to which the professors of religion are liable by such antidotes as these, is appealing to a certain refinement of feeling which the disease has extinguished or diminished, instead of alarming them with the prospect of death. It is not by sentimental addresses, nor by an appeal to the delicacies and sensibilities of a soul diseased, that the apostles proposed to alarm the fears, or revive the vigilance of disorderly walkers; they drew aside the veil of eternity; they presented the thought, in all its terror, of the coming of Christ "as a thief in the night." I would not be understood to insinuate that the more refined topics of appeal may not occasionally be resorted to with great propriety: all I would be supposed to regret is the exclusive employment of a class of considerations, of one order of motives, derived from

religious sensibility, to the neglect of those which are founded on eternal prospects and interests. As it is seldom safe for an accountable creature to lose sight of these in his most elevated moments; so least of all can they be dispensed with, in the season of successful temptation. It is then especially, if I am not greatly mistaken, whatever may have been our past profession or attainments, that we need to be reminded of the awful certainty of future retribution, to recall to our remembrance that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If, in the scheme of doctrine we have embraced, we suspect there is something incompatible with the use of such admonitions, we may be assured, either that the doctrine itself is false, or that our inference from it is erroneous; since no speculative tenets in religion can be so indubitably certain, as the universality of the moral government of God.

Before I close this Preface, I must be permitted to add, that the prevailing practice of representing the promises of the gospel as *unconditional*, or at least of carefully avoiding the obvious phraseology which the contrary suppo-

sition would suggest, appears to me directly to pave the way to Antinomianism. The idea of *meritorious* conditions is indeed utterly incompatible with the gospel, considered as a system of grace. But if there be no conditions of salvation whatever, how it is possible to confute the pretensions, or confound the confidence of the most licentious professor, I am at an utter loss to discover. It will be in vain to allege the entire absence of internal holiness together with all the fruits of the Spirit, as defeating his hope of eternal life, since, upon the supposition we are combating, the answer is ready, that the enjoyment of future felicity is suspended on no conditions. The absurdity of this notion is not less palpable than its presumption. All promises must either be made to individuals by name, or indefinitely to persons of a specific character. A moment's attention will be sufficient to satisfy us that the promise of pardon in the New Testament is of the latter description: in no one instance is it addressed to the individual by name, but to the penitent, the believing, the obedient, or to some similar specification of character. Before any person therefore can justly appro-

priate the promise to himself, he must ascertain his possession of that character, or, which is precisely the same thing, he must perceive that he comes within the prescribed condition. When it is affirmed, that except we repent, we shall perish, is it not manifest that he only is entitled to claim exemption from that doom, who is conscious of the feelings of a penitent? For the same reason, if he only who believes shall be saved, our assurance of salvation, as far as it depends upon evidence, must be exactly proportioned to the certainty we feel of our actual believing. To abandon these principles, is to involve ourselves in an inextricable labyrinth, to lie open to the grossest delusions, to build conclusions of infinite moment on phantoms light as air. He who flatters himself with the hope of salvation without perceiving in himself a specific difference of character from "the world that lieth in wickedness," either founds his persuasion absolutely on nothing, or on an immediate revelation, on a preternatural discovery of a matter of fact, on which the scriptures are totally silent. This absurd notion of unconditional promises, by severing the assurance of salvation from all the

fruits of the Spirit, from every trace and feature of a renovated nature and a regenerate state, opens the widest possible door to licentiousness.

As far as it is sustained by the least shadow of reasoning, it may be traced to the practice of confounding the secret purposes of the Supreme Being with his revealed promises. That in the breast of the Deity an eternal purpose has been formed respecting the salvation of a certain portion of the human race, is a doctrine, which, it appears to me, is clearly revealed. But this secret purpose is so far from being incompatible with the necessary conditions of salvation, that they form a part of it; their existence is an inseparable link in the execution of the divine decree; for the same wisdom which has appointed the end, has also infallibly determined the means by which it shall be accomplished; and as the personal direction of the decree remains a secret, until it is developed in the event, it cannot possibly, considered in itself, lay a foundation for confidence. That a certain number of the human race are ordained to eternal life, may be inferred with much probability from

many passages of scripture; but if any person infers from these general premises, that he is of that number, he advances a proposition without the slightest colour of evidence. An assurance of salvation, can consequently in no instance be deduced from the doctrine of absolute decrees, until they manifest themselves in their actual effects, that is, in that renewal of the heart which the Bible affirms to be essential to future felicity. But I am detaining the Reader too long from the pleasure and the advantage he may promise himself from the perusal of the following Treatise, where he will meet with no illiberal insinuations, no personal invective, the too frequent seasoning of controversy, and the ordinary gratification of vulgar minds; but a series of calm and dispassionate reasonings out of the scriptures. That they may produce all the beneficial results which the excellent Author has so much at heart, is the fervent prayer of the writer of these lines.

ROBERT HALL.

Leicester, July 2, 1819.

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pleasure, and the advantage, of my promise
himself from the pursuit of the following Treatise,
and where he will meet with no slight business
and no personal interest, the too frequent
recurring of controversy, and the original spirit
of action of vulgar minds, but a series of calm
and dispassionate reasoning, out of the scriptures,
that they may produce all the beneficial results
which the excellent Author has so wisely and heartily
in the former part of the history of these times.

ROBERT HALL
London, May 21st 1811.
The Author of the
History of the
Christian Church
and the
History of the
Christian Church
and the
History of the
Christian Church

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INQUIRY,

&c. &c.

CHAP. I.

ON THE IMPORT OF THE PHRASE, "THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN," AS USED TO DESIGNATE THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION.

THE most appropriate denomination of the Economy of Grace introduced by the Messiah, is that which our blessed Lord and his forerunner uniformly employed, "The Kingdom, or Reign of Heaven,"* and its synonyme, "The Kingdom, or Reign of God." No other appellation is, as far as I recollect, given to it by the writers of the New Testament. The term, "The Gospel Dispensation," now so generally substituted in its room, though perhaps not altogether improper, cannot lay claim to so high an authority, nor can it be considered as equally significant and expressive. It has, I am aware, been generally thought to be convertible with the former; but this is by

* For the import of the phrase *η Βασιλεια τω θεω, or των ουρανων*, I would recommend the reader to consult Dr. Campbell's Preliminary Dissertations to his Translation of the Four Gospels. Dissertation V, Part I.

no means true; and it is much to be regretted, that the adoption of it should have led, as it has done, to the total disuse of the phrase, "The Kingdom of Heaven," as it is wholly inadequate to supply its place.

The terms, "the kingdom of heaven," and "the gospel dispensation," are far from being perfectly synonymous. They relate, it is true, to the same object; but they present it to our minds under different aspects. The former embraces, in its vast amplitude of meaning, the whole scheme of our redemption: the latter comprehends but a small proportion of it.

It will hardly be denied, that the long and total disuse of the phrase, "the kingdom, or reign of heaven," has rendered its meaning almost unintelligible. Few readers of the New Testament are sufficiently aware of the peculiar felicity of this expression, as applied to the new order of things established by the Messiah. And yet, perhaps, it is not saying too much to affirm, that without an adequate conception of its beauty and force, our views of the Economy of Redemption will necessarily be partial and obscure.

To comprehend aright the mysteries of our holy faith, the terms employed in the New Testament to define them, must first be clearly understood;* since any obscurity which attaches to

* It is well observed by Lord Coke in his Institutes of the Laws of England, "Ad recte docendum oportet primùm inquirere nomina,

them, will, from the necessity of the case, equally involve the principles they are used to explain. And though modern divines may have discarded the phraseology of the sacred writers, as too antiquated for the times in which we live; yet we may venture to predict, that, till different sentiments shall prevail, the New Testament will remain, to a great degree, a sealed book. It cannot be otherwise. A familiar acquaintance with its sacred diction must precede an extensive knowledge of its divine mysteries. And if it be our ambition to be “mighty in the scriptures,” we must practise the lesson so long forgotten, but not on that account the less important, “Hold fast *the form of sound words* which thou hast heard of me;”^{*}—advice originally given by St. Paul to his son Timothy, but which may justly be considered as addressed to all, who, in future ages, should read this divine admonition.

The peculiarities of style and manner observable in the sacred writings are by no means arbitrary, as some have imagined. The forms of expression we there meet with, so utterly unlike the diction of any other writings of ancient or modern times, were not adopted through inadvertence, or caprice, or the mere affectation of singularity. On the

quia rerum cognitio à *nominibus* rerum dependit.” He adds, “*Nomina si nescis, perit cognitio rerum.*” The sentiment expressed by these words is of general application.

^{*} 2 Tim. i. 13.

contrary, the language of the sacred penmen is an exact transcript of their thoughts. It was the fittest vehicle they could have chosen to convey their meaning. Their style and manner were novel, simply because their doctrine was new. Being the founders of a new school, they were, like the founders of other schools, necessitated, sometimes to employ terms in current use in a sense remote from their common acceptation; at other times to form combinations of language unsanctioned by former precedent; and, on some occasions, to invent new terms, when such as were already in use were inadequate to express their meaning. To understand the doctrine of the sacred writers, we must therefore carefully examine the sacred peculiarities of their manner of unfolding it; and instead of resting satisfied with a vague and undefined impression of what they intended to express, but which, as we imagine, might have been expressed in happier and more intelligible diction, weigh every term they employ with the nicest care, nor ever rest satisfied until our minds become familiar with it, and we arrive at the conviction, that no other term could be found adequate to supply its place.

The observations contained in the last two paragraphs, though of a general nature, have been made with a view to apply them to the denomination given to the economy of our redemption by our blessed Lord and his illustrious harbinger.

Unintelligible as that denomination may now seem, through long disuse, I will yet hazard the assertion, that no term since invented is so comprehensive in its meaning, or so adequate to convey a just conception of the several parts which constitute the whole scheme of our salvation. Other denominations apply only to some few of "the mysteries of the kingdom of God;" and exhibit them in a detached and insulated form. But in the phrase, "the kingdom, or reign of heaven," we behold, as in a faithful mirror, a perfect representation of the entire plan, and see each constituent part reflected in its true dimensions, and in its relative bearings on the whole.

The term, "the gospel dispensation," includes little more of the economy of redemption, than that gracious provision God has made for the pardon of sin, and the restoration of apostate man to his forfeited favour. It confines the glad tidings of salvation to the proclamation of forgiveness and reconciliation to God through the blood of the cross. But the phrase, "the kingdom, or reign of heaven," while it necessarily supposes this, as laying the only solid basis of Messiah's spiritual empire, includes in it, what is equally essential in the constitution of the scheme of our redemption, and equally cheering to the mind of every good man—the re-establishment of God's original dominion in the hearts of the children of men. And, what is most important to remark,

this is uniformly represented by our blessed Lord as constituting *the very sum and substance* of the gospel proclamation; and is emphatically styled by St. Mark, “*the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.*” His words are very remarkable; “Now, after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming *the glad tidings of the kingdom of God*, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and *the kingdom of God is at hand*; repent ye, and *believe the glad tidings.*”* That God was about to set up his everlasting kingdom, was the joyful news which our Redeemer published, when first he entered on his ministry of grace and mercy. And when he sent his Apostles on their gracious errand to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, his commission was, “As ye go, preach, saying, *The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*”† And when he “appointed the seventy also, and sent them two by two before his face, into every city and place whither he himself would come;” this was his charge, “Into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you, and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, *The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*”‡ Nor can an attentive reader of the New Testament fail to have observed, that more than half the parables of our blessed Lord are professedly designed to illustrate, by a comparison with sensible objects, or the affairs of men, the nature of

* Mark i. 14, 15.

† Matt. x. 7.

‡ Luke x. 8, 9.

that heavenly kingdom which he had announced as just at hand; or that he styles his doctrines, “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven;” or that the time which intervened between his resurrection and ascension to heaven, was spent in “speaking” to his apostles “of *the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*.”* And what other conclusion can he draw from hence, but that the proper denomination of the gracious economy under which we live, is that given to it by our Lord himself, “*the kingdom of heaven*;” and that, to understand the nature of that economy, we must clearly discern the propriety of so denominating it? And here, let me be permitted to suggest to my readers, the great advantage they would derive from a careful study of those divine similitudes, chosen by their great Teacher to explain to our feeble understandings the deep mysteries of his kingdom; and to assure them, that in no other way can they attain so clear and accurate a conception of the real character of the gospel dispensation, or become so fully initiated into its holy mysteries.

The great advantage of contemplating the evangelical dispensation as “*the kingdom*,” or “*reign of heaven*,” consists in this; that while the grace and compassion of God in remitting our sins and reinstating us in his favour, are displayed to the greatest advantage; the necessity of obe-

* Acts i. 3.

dience to the will of God in order to salvation is demonstrated beyond the possibility of a doubt; and all arguments for licentiousness founded on a partial view of the economy of grace, are silenced for ever. The absolute *inconsistency* of that awful conclusion, "Let us sin, that grace may abound,"—a conclusion which every real Christian rejects with holy indignation;—the absolute *inconsistency*, I say, of such a conclusion with the *nature* of the gospel dispensation, the *incompatibility* of sinful indulgence with the manifestations of divine mercy by Christ our Saviour, though generally admitted, and sedulously instilled into the minds of their hearers by every faithful minister of the Gospel, is yet far from being distinctly apprehended. That it is incompatible, is evident to all but those who wish to find an excuse for their sins. But the real *grounds* of this incompatibility, the greater part probably of even good men would feel themselves at a loss to explain. Nor can it be wonderful that such a difficulty should exist, when the only denomination, adequate to convey a just conception of the whole scheme of salvation, has for ages been obsolete; a circumstance, which could have arisen from no other cause than that of the confined and partial views so long and so generally entertained of the character of the dispensation under which we live. If the grace of God itself were but seen in its true colours—in other words, if the economy established by Christ

were but rightly understood as necessarily involving in it the restoration of God's moral empire over the world, the establishment of order, government, and subjection—ideas necessarily implied in the phrase, “the kingdom of heaven,”—then it would be instantly perceived, that the grace of God cannot be honoured by our continuing in sin. It is only by confining our view to the gospel scheme, as a scheme of forgiveness and reconciliation, that we can be in any danger of perverting the grace of God to licentiousness. With such a partial view of the plan of redemption, some might possibly be led to conclude, that, as *grace* refers only to the exercise of forgiveness, the indulgence of sin, by multiplying the occasions for its exercise, may not be unacceptable to God, as it affords him an opportunity of exhibiting his forbearance and long-suffering to greater advantage. But if the gospel scheme be not thus limited in its purposes and designs; if the glad tidings of salvation do not exclusively relate to the justification of the ungodly; if the forgiveness of sin be but one of the blessed consequences of Christ's coming in the flesh; if redemption comprehend higher and more exalted privileges than forgiveness itself; if reconciliation to our offended Maker be but the preparatory step in the economy of our salvation, introducing us, as it were, into a state of capacity for receiving richer manifestations of the divine goodness: then

sin, so far from affording an opportunity for the exhibition of divine grace, does, in reality, throw impediments in the way of its exercise; hinders, so to speak, the free course of God's mercy; and, as far as it can, robs him of that glory which would result to him from the salvation of his people.

And that the gospel dispensation does include more than the mere pardon of sin, the denomination given to it by our blessed Lord is, of itself, sufficient to prove. For, surely, the phrase, "the kingdom of heaven," cannot be considered as the appropriate denomination of an economy, the only distinguishing feature of which is the exercise of mercy to the guilty. It presupposes this, as a building presupposes a foundation: but, that foundation for the exercise of still richer grace having been thus laid, there is reared upon it a structure of surpassing beauty and magnificence. Being redeemed by the blood of Christ from the curse of a violated law, the great impediment in the way of our salvation is indeed removed; but the work of salvation itself still remains to be completed. The word of God forbids us to imagine, that, being brought into a state of reconciliation with God by the blood of his Son, nothing further is wanting to our salvation. Quite the reverse. On the contrary, our reconciliation to God, while we were enemies, is represented as merely affording us a confident ground of hope,

that the work, so graciously begun, shall be assuredly perfected in us. For thus the Apostle reasons; "God commended his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.* For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, *much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*"*

The gospel dispensation is the establishment of Messiah's kingdom. And this kingdom must be set up in our hearts, before the purposes of God in our redemption are fully accomplished. Satan's empire must be overthrown, the thralldom of sin broken, the corruptions of our hearts vanquished and slain, and every thought of our minds brought into subjection to Christ; or we are not saved. If we still have our conversation, as in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; the blood of Christ has been shed, as to us, in vain. Christ is "the author of eternal salvation" to such only as "obey him."† Hence those earnest exhortations, those solemn warnings, those repeated admonitions, counsels, and reproofs, with which the writings of the New Testament abound. Hence those anxious solitudes expressed by the Apostles of Christ for the Churches they had planted. It was this which caused them to shed

* Rom. v. 8—10.

† Hebrews v. 9.

such bitter tears, when they heard of their departure from the purity of the faith. It was this which filled their hearts with joy and triumph, amidst all their affliction and distress, when they “received good tidings of their faith and charity;” for by this they were assured, that they had not “laboured in vain.” Who can read the tender and affecting language in which St. Paul addresses his Thessalonian converts, and which the reader will find in the 3d chapter of his first Epistle to them, without instantly discovering the true cause of those alternate fears and joys which he there expresses on their account? Who but must be sensible, that these fears and joys arose from his deep conviction of the absolute necessity of personal holiness in order to salvation? Indeed, the affectionate request to God on their behalf, with which that chapter concludes, places this beyond the possibility of a doubt; “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: *to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*”*

Nor was it for others only that the Apostle felt such holy jealousy. He expresses the same fear with respect to his own salvation. “Know ye not,” says he to the Corinthians, “that they

* 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13.

which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.*"*

And having, through life, exercised this godly jealousy over himself, and this habitual fear of finally failing of eternal life, this holy man was enabled through divine grace to express such confident assurance of his future glory and blessedness. "I am now ready to be offered," says he in the immediate prospect of martyrdom, "and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."† And he, who would appropriate to himself this triumphant language in the prospect of death, judgment and eternity, must follow the Apostle, even as he also followed Christ. An assurance which is not thus founded, is, to use our Lord's instructive similitude, "like a house built upon the sand."‡

* 1 Cor. ix. 24—27.

† 2 Tim. iv. 6—8.

‡ Matt. vii. 26.

We are not, then, to dissociate in our minds the glad tidings of the Gospel from the publication of Messiah's reign; as if the latter formed no constituent part of the glad tidings themselves, but, on the contrary, lessened their value, and abated the joy with which otherwise we might have received them. Even the Jewish Prophets, who lived under the dispensation of the Law, and to whom, therefore, deliverance from the yoke of divine authority, had it really constituted any part of the more glorious economy which was then shortly to be introduced, would have presented itself in its most inviting forms, never once allude to such an expectation. On the contrary, when Messiah's advent is the theme of their prophetic song, the thought which seems to fill their minds, and to give birth to their most elevated joys and holiest raptures, is, that when Messiah should appear, he would set up his everlasting kingdom, and extend his righteous sceptre over all the nations of the earth. And this reign of the Prince Messiah they represent as a theme of universal exultation and joy; "Say ye among the heathen, *that the Lord reigneth*: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. *Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord:*

*for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.**

And the Prophet Isaiah, who, on account of his clear insight into the mysteries of redemption, and his almost graphical representation of the sufferings, death, and future triumphs of our blessed Redeemer, has been styled “the Evangelical Prophet,” even he, when expressly referring to the first proclamation of the Gospel, describes it as an announcement of the righteous and happy reign of Messiah the Prince. “How beautiful,” he exclaims, as his prophetic eye first caught a sight of the heralds of grace and mercy, hastening their steps towards Zion, to proclaim the joyful message of salvation, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, *Thy God reigneth!*”† Yes; “Thy God reigneth” is the proclamation so emphatically styled “good tidings,” “good tidings of good,” “the publishing salvation.” This is the news, which is to fill every inhabitant of the holy city with gladness. These are the tidings, at which the waste places of Jerusalem are called upon to “break forth, and sing together for joy.”‡

It was not in the character of a priest simply that Messiah was to appear, but of a “priest

* Psalm xcvi. 10—13.

† Isaiah lii. 7.

‡ Ver. 9.

upon his throne;"* and hence, among other reasons, when consecrated to the office of the priesthood, it was said unto him, "Thou art a priest for ever *after the order of Melchisedec.*"† For let it be remarked, that the name "Melchisedec" signifies, when interpreted, "*king of righteousness;*" and that he who bore this mysterious name was "king of Salem," which is, "king of peace."‡ How fitly chosen as the type of him, who, while he was to bear the iniquities of his people, and was appointed to make intercession for the transgressors, was ordained to "sit upon the throne of his father David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment, and with justice for ever;"§ and, "of the increase of whose government and *peace*, it was declared, there shall be no end;" in whose "days the righteous are to flourish, and abundance of *peace* so long as the moon endureth."||

The humiliation, sufferings, and death of our divine Redeemer, were the steps, if I may so speak, by which he was to ascend the throne of universal dominion. For thus it is written of him in the book of Prophecy; "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. *Therefore* will I divide him a portion with the great,

* Zech. vi. 13.

† Psalm cx. 4.

‡ Hebrews vii. 2.

§ Isaiah ix. 7.

|| Psalm lxxii. 7.

and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; *because* he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* The redemption of his people by the shedding of his blood constitutes the foundation on which his authority over them as their *Lord* is established. His sufferings were to precede, and to prepare the way for the revelation of his glory. And in this respect the redemption which Christ has wrought out for his people bears a strict analogy to the redemption which Jehovah anciently accomplished in behalf of the chosen tribes. But as this subject is very extensive, I shall reserve it for separate discussion in the following chapter.

* Isaiah liii. 11, 12.

CHAP. II.

ON THE ANALOGY BETWEEN THE MOSAIC AND CHRISTIAN
DISPENSATIONS.

IN the conclusion of the foregoing chapter I called the reader's attention to the striking analogy which is observable between that redemption which Jehovah in ancient times wrought out in behalf of the twelve tribes of Israel, and the redemption which in the fulness of time Christ accomplished for his people. It is far from my intention, however, to illustrate every point of resemblance which may be shewn to exist between them. It is to one particular feature, more immediately connected with the subject discussed in this volume, that the following remarks will be exclusively confined.

It is almost impossible to have read the books of Moses, and not to have remarked, that the ultimate design of God in redeeming his people Israel from the iron yoke of Egyptian bondage, was the establishment of his future empire over them. This design is very distinctly announced by Jehovah, when first he appears to Moses to

invest him with his high commission; “When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, *ye shall serve God* upon this mountain;”* and still more distinctly when afterwards he commands him to deliver this message to the Egyptian monarch, “Thus saith Jehovah, Let my people go, *that they may serve me.*”† And this purpose of God in their deliverance from the bondage of Pharaoh is as distinctly acknowledged and approved by the Israelites themselves, in the triumphal song which they sang unto the Lord on the shores of the Red Sea; in which, after celebrating their redemption in these emphatic words, “Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed;” they add, as if to recognize the new relation into which their late redemption had brought them, “*The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.*”‡ Nor is it unworthy the reader’s observation, that throughout the four last books of Moses, but more especially in the book of Deuteronomy, the redemption of Israel from Egypt is again and again represented as the basis of Jehovah’s temporal kingdom over them: whence it is fair to infer, that the establishment of that kingdom was the purpose ultimately designed to be accomplished by their redemption.

Now, as the redemption of the chosen tribes was but the preparatory step to the accomplishment of God’s ultimate design—the establishment

* Exodus iii. 12.

† Ibid. viii. 1.

‡ Ibid. xv. 13, 18.

of his temporal kingdom over them; so the redemption of the true Israel of God by the death of Christ is but a preparatory step in the work of our salvation, laying the foundation of Messiah's everlasting kingdom, in the complete establishment of which the gracious purposes of God towards his people receive their full accomplishment. As Jehovah delivered the twelve tribes of Israel from the heavy yoke of Egyptian task-masters, "*that they might serve him;*" so Christ rescues his people from their more cruel bondage, and more hopeless captivity to Satan, *that he may capacitate them to become his willing and obedient subjects.* He "gave himself for us," says our Apostle, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."*

Nor ought the fact to be overlooked, that the righteous laws by which Jehovah's kingdom was administered, are everywhere, throughout the Jewish scriptures, represented as constituting the most pre-eminent of those advantages which resulted to them from their redemption. "*He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.* He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them"—is the grateful acknowledgement of the Psalmist, when celebrating God's goodness to his chosen people. Of all their distinguishing mercies, this was the greatest—it was

* Titus ii. 14.

the crown and glory of them all: a mercy this, which called for the loudest songs of gratitude and praise. To such an expression of their thanks the Psalmist invites and stirs up his people, "Praise ye the Lord."*

But it was not reserved for the times of David first to make this happy discovery. That in this consisted their peculiar glory and blessedness, even God himself had distinctly declared, when first he entered into covenant with his chosen people. "Ye have seen," says God, "what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me *a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.*"† So Moses, when recounting the peculiar advantages enjoyed by Israel above all people, assigns the pre-eminence to those statutes and ordinances which he had given them. This was the distinction which was to excite the admiration and envy of all surrounding nations. "Behold," says he, addressing the children of Israel, "I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that thou shouldest do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and understand-

* Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20.

† Exodus xix. 4—6.

ing in the sight of the nations, which *shall hear all these statutes*, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, *that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?*”*

And every pious Israelite esteemed God’s holy law his richest inheritance. The corn, and wine, and oil, in which the land of Canaan abounded, might present the strongest attractions to those who knew not God, and desired not the knowledge of his ways; but not so to those, who, like David, feared God. “The law of thy mouth,” says he, “is better to me than thousands of gold and silver. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart.”† Nor were these sentiments peculiar to David. On the contrary, the very Psalm, from which I have selected these devout expressions of his delight in the law of God, sets out with representing them as common to all good men; “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies,

* Deut. iv. 5—8.

† Psalm cxix. 72, 97, 103, 111.

and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.”* And as this course of holy obedience was agreeable to the will of God, and to his design when he revealed his will to his chosen people, and “commanded them to keep his precepts diligently,” the holy Psalmist prays, “O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!”† And this prayer of David will be that of every good man under the present more perfect dispensation. That we live under a different mode of divine administration, can make no difference as to the nature and source of true blessedness. These are ever the same. The same fountain of pure and living water, which then made glad the city of God, still flows, though in larger and more copious streams, to cheer and gladden the hearts of God’s faithful servants till time shall be no more. If David has said, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord!” He, who is both David’s Son and Lord, has said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”‡ If the sweet singer of Israel has said, “Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with their whole heart!” He who is the faithful and true witness has said, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”§

* Psalm cxix, 1—3. † Ibid. 5. ‡ Matt. v. 8. § Rev. xxii. 14.

Without obedience to the righteous statutes of Jehovah, the redemption which he had accomplished for his people Israel proved to them of no avail. The promises made to them were all suspended on this one condition. "See," says Moses, after recapitulating the law in the ears of all the people, "I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him; (for he is thy life, and the length of thy days;) that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."* And the

* Deut. xxx. 15—20.

truth of this prophetic admonition their subsequent history too awfully demonstrated. A short epitome of that instructive history the reader may find by turning to the second chapter of the book of Judges, where he will see a forcible illustration of this truth, that the blessedness of Israel wholly depended on their fidelity to Jehovah their King; and that disobedience to his will, and rebellion against his righteous authority, were invariably attended with severe manifestations of his awful displeasure.*

It has been imagined by some, that, as God foresaw the rebellions and apostacies of his people Israel, and as it is affirmed by inspired authority that the Law was given "that the offence might abound,"† he could not but be secretly well-pleased to see his ultimate designs so completely accomplished; and could not have felt equal satisfaction, had the experiment tried by the institution of the legal economy been attended with a different result. I much fear that this sentiment, although perhaps not reduced to words, is secretly cherished by too many even among good men. By ungodly men it has been confidently asserted. But who are they that dare, merely to give consistency to a scheme of religious doctrine, or to shew with what tremendous hardihood they can follow it through all its mazes, and through all its consequences, even though it

* Judges ii. 10—23.

† Rom. v. 20.

should at last issue in a disguised but real atheism; I ask, who are they that dare to give God the lie? And yet what else can we think of the adoption of a sentiment, which, independently of the dishonour it reflects on the divine perfections, flatly contradicts the most unequivocal assurances from the mouth of God himself to the contrary? Can his reply to Moses, when he repeated the solemn engagement to obey the will of God, voluntarily entered into by the children of Israel, immediately subsequent to God's descent upon Mount Sinai to proclaim amidst thick clouds of darkness his fiery law, have wholly escaped their observation? "I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. *O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!*"* Or, have they never read that most affecting address, which God makes to his rebellious people by the mouth of his prophet, "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way thou shouldest go. *O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea; thy seed also had been as the sand, and the*

* Deut. v. 28.

offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.”* Or can it be, that God’s *actual reply* to the blasphemous and atheistical insinuation I am now repelling, and which, it appears, was made by the house of Israel themselves, with a view to palliate the guilt of their rebellion against God, could never have been once made the subject of serious reflection? “Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*”† Or, is not the word, or even the *oath* of God, to be received, because (for shame be it spoken) it gives the lie to a sentiment founded only on the idle dreams of a distempered imagination, or on the equally vain conclusions of a feeble, dark, and benighted understanding?

It is most evident then that whatever might be the *actual* result of the experiment tried by the institution of the law of Moses, that law was designed *to be obeyed*; and that the guilt of such as dared to transgress it, was not in the slightest degree palliated by the circumstance, that the Legislator

* Isaiah xlviii. 18, 19.

† Ezekiel xxxiii. 10, 11.

himself foresaw their future violation of it. How to reconcile the divine foreknowledge with human accountability, is indeed a problem which the wisdom and ingenuity of man has never been able to solve. But then, on the other hand, we cannot deny either that God doth foreknow the sins which men will commit in violation of his law; or that the sins thus committed deserve God's severest displeasure. With the knowledge of these first principles of moral truth we ought to rest satisfied: and to every doubt which atheistical objectors may attempt to raise on a point of such infinite moment, we should reply in the spirit and language of our Apostle; "If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: *for then how shall God judge the world?*"* And well might the Apostle ask this question; for, on the principle I am opposing, God must consent either to forego his attribute of prescience, or else to relinquish his prerogative of judging the world. Now whatever difficulty may attend reconciling the attributes of the Most High with his prerogatives, it is absolutely necessary that we adopt a scheme which presupposes their perfect harmony, or we fall into the rankest atheism.

To such then as would insinuate that Jehovah must of necessity have been secretly well-pleased

* Rom. iii. 5, 6.

with the violation of the law of Mount Sinai, inasmuch as it tended to demonstrate the necessity of another and better covenant, I would reply, *the fact is directly the reverse*. I speak with confidence, because I am supported by the word and oath of God. And I have thought it necessary to call the reader's attention so particularly to this subject, because I fear the sentiment I am now opposing finds, in the bosom of every man, too many advocates ready to plead in its favour; and that there are few indeed, who, at some period or other of their christian profession, have not secretly entertained it. The mode too frequently adopted, in speaking of God's design in giving the law, seems calculated to encourage such a thought. And when once it has been suggested to the mind, how almost instinctively do we perceive the use we may make of it in calming the terrors, and in silencing the reproaches, of a guilty conscience. O what a happy discovery this to a mind in search of some excuse for its hourly transgressions; at once in love with sin, yet fearful of its tremendous consequences! If Jehovah was secretly well-pleased to see his law broken by his ancient people, merely because the violation of it tended to the accomplishment of his hidden purposes; then must every sin be equally pleasing in his sight; since it is certain, that all violations of his will are equally foreseen by him, and have an equal tendency to the furtherance of his mysterious

counsels: Who then can fail to perceive the absolute necessity of denying the impious position, that the *violation of the law of Mount Sinai was secretly well-pleasing to God*, if he would deprive sin of its strongest palliation, or render *any* of the divine commands binding on the conscience?

But if it be really true, that the law of Moses was given that it might be obeyed, and that notwithstanding God foresaw how his people would transgress it, he yet visited their transgressions with the most awful marks of his displeasure; then how vain, how impious their hope, who think to recommend themselves to the divine favour by their violations of the law of Christ; as if their unrighteousness, by exhibiting to greater advantage the grace of God, must be more acceptable to God than obedience to his will; a holy life affording (as they suppose) fewer occasions for displaying it. If sins committed against a law purposely given “that the offence might abound,” were yet hateful in the sight of God; how much more hateful must those sins appear, which are committed against the law of Christ, in the annunciation of which no such secret purpose has ever been disclosed! The violation of the first covenant prepared the way, in some respects, for the establishment of the second: but if this second covenant be broken, by what shall *it* be succeeded? Has God any richer stores of mercy in reserve for those who trample under foot the Son

of God, than those he has prepared for such as obey him? Will they who sin presumptuously, after they have received the knowledge of the truth, be advanced to higher thrones in glory, than they to whom sin has been a daily burden? Where are these distinctions promised? Can one intimation even of such high honours and felicities being kept in store for those who wilfully sin against the law of Christ, be shewn in any one page of the sacred volume? Rather, are not the severest threatenings pointed against such profane and ungodly men? Where in the book of God are to be found such tremendous denunciations of impending wrath, as those which are levelled against them? Ye wilful apostates from the faith of Christ, who “turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness,” read these awful words of an Apostle, and tremble; “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Ven-

geance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* To whom is this fearful warning addressed, if not to you? It portrays your character to the very life. You, you are they, who “tread under foot the Son of God;” since you openly deny his right to reign over you. You, you are they, who “account the blood of the covenant,” wherewith you profess yourselves to have been washed from the guilt and pollution of your sins, “an unholy thing;” since, according to your own avowal, you were washed in his blood, only to obtain a licence to commit fresh abominations, and to contract fresh impurity. You, you are they, who “do despite to the spirit of grace;” for having invited this divine inhabitant to take up his dwelling in your hearts, you daily and hourly insult him by your contemptuous disregard of his sacred monitions; and, what fills up the measure of your iniquity, and the vials of God’s wrath, urge, as an excuse for your sins, the grace which would save you from perdition.

But this fearful warning, while it exhibits a faithful picture of your hateful character, exposes also the delusion you are practising on yourselves. Because the law was given, “that the offence might abound,” you weakly and wickedly imagine

* Heb. x. 26—31.

that God must be secretly well-pleased in witnessing your transgressions of the law of Christ—shutting your eyes against a fact, which, had it been but once adverted to, must have shaken your false confidence and peace to its very foundations: the fact, I mean, to which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews forces your attention; namely, that “he who despised Moses’ law *died without mercy*, under two or three witnesses;”—a fact, which no sophistry can reconcile with the licentious consequences you would deduce from God’s secret purpose in giving the law. What! no mercy extended to those, who, by trampling on the authority of a law *expressly* said to have been given “that the offence *might abound*,” were instrumental in accomplishing the mysterious counsels of the Most High; and with whom therefore, according to your blasphemous conclusion, the Deity could not but be secretly well-pleased? Then can you expect no mercy. For you a far sorer punishment is kept in store, than Moses ever denounced against those who presumptuously transgressed his law. For you Tophet is prepared, the place which God hath ordained of old; and suddenly, when you are fondly dreaming of mansions of eternal felicity as the merited reward of your having by your sins subserved God’s secret purposes, you will sink into its devouring flames, and perish for ever. O repent of this your wickedness; and pray God,

if perhaps the thought of your hearts may be forgiven you. Of this be assured, that there is a sin against God for which no mercy is laid up in store; to which no forgiveness will ever be extended;* for which we are not even permitted to intercede in our prayers;†—a sin, which the blood of the Redeemer was not shed to expiate;‡—a sin, from which the Apostles of Christ were not commissioned to absolve the guilty offender;§—a sin never followed by the tears of godly penitence,|| but sealing up the soul which has committed it in hopeless impenitence and despair. Beware then lest the spirit of God's grace, having long striven with you in vain, you are given up to judicial hardness of heart, till, having committed this unpardonable sin, and then being beyond the reach of mercy, your final doom is irrecoverably fixed.

Let none of my readers persuade themselves, that in our day it is not possible to sin beyond the hope of pardon. To my mind it appears clear, that a wilful renunciation of the authority of Christ as the King of Zion, that an open denial of the obligation of believers to keep his commandments,—a crime to which St. Peter refers in the second chapter of his second Epistle, where, speaking of false teachers in the church of Christ, he describes them as “bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them”¶—

* Matt. xii. 31, 32.

† 1 John v. 16.

‡ Heb. x. 26.

§ John xx. 23.

|| Heb. vi. 6.

¶ 2 Pet. ii. 1.

I say, to me it appears clear, that this is the very crime which is excepted in the promise of forgiveness. Do I speak too confidently? or rather, is not the word of God equally plain and decisive? Is it not of such as these, who, after professing the faith of Christ, openly renounce his righteous authority, that St. Jude thus writes? “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, *turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness*, and denying the only Lord God, and *our Lord Jesus Christ*.—Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.”* Is it possible, I ask, to read this language, and not instantly perceive whom it was intended to describe? The *malignity* of Cain, who hated his brother Abel and slew him, because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous;†—the *covetousness* of Balaam, who, for the sake of a paltry reward, taught the children

* Jude 4, 11, 12, 13.

† 1 John iii. 12.

of Israel to transgress ;*—and the *pride* and *hatred of controul*, which sent down Korah and his company alive into the pit ;†—*these* are the characteristic features of such, as are “ of old *ordained to condemnation*”—of those “ wandering stars, to whom *is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.*” And are there, in our days, none to whom this awful description will apply? None, who, with more than Cain’s malignity, traduce their more righteous brethren, and murder by their lying doctrine the souls of men? None, who, like Balaam, for the wages of unrighteousness, cast a stumbling-block before God’s people, to cause them to transgress? None, who, like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, cast off all restraint, and refuse to bow their necks to the yoke of Christ himself, of whose dominion the authority of Moses was but a faint shadow? Alas, “ this vine of Sodom, whose grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters bitter,” has taken deep root in our land ; and, like the fabled tree of Java, distils pestilence and death. Woe, woe to that man who ventures to repose beneath its shade. He who slumbers there, slumbers to rise no more. O let the Churches of Christ beware how they encourage the growth of this deadly plant, if happily for them they are not yet overshadowed by its branches. O let them beware how they give ear to this lying delusion. Other errors may

* Rev. ii. 14.

† Numbers xvi.

consist with rectitude of intention; but not so this damnable heresy. It blinds the understanding, only to deprave the heart. It extinguishes the light, that it may lead our unconscious feet, where we shall stumble and fall, and be snared, and taken. Let the Churches of Christ be deeply solicitous to secure to themselves individually that honourable testimony, which he, “who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, and who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,” bore to the Church of Ephesus; “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how *thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.*”^{*} And how did they try them? “By their fruits.”[†] This is the sacred touchstone appointed by the blessed Saviour for the certain detection of false prophets, and false teachers in every age of the world. And would the Church of Christ invariably bring them to this infallible test, they would find it like Ithuriel’s spear, and these wolves in sheep’s clothing returning instantly to their own likeness, would, like Satan as described by our divine poet, “start up discovered and surprised.”

I before observed, that the righteous statutes and judgments which God gave to his people Israel constituted their peculiar glory. The power of the law to condemn the transgressor of it is

^{*} Rev. ii. 2.

[†] Matt. vii. 20.

perfectly consistent with this representation. The Apostle Paul strongly labours this point,* and that in the very midst of his argument to prove the impossibility of obtaining justification and life by obedience to the law. And the conclusion at which he arrives is this, that notwithstanding the sinner, by his transgression of the law, is become obnoxious to the curse; yet the law itself is holy, and just, and good; *holy and just*, as exacting nothing at our hands but what every man's conscience must acknowledge to be highly equitable; and *good*, because it reveals the way of life: and if the sinner wanders from the path it so plainly marks out, and stumbles and falls upon the dark mountains, the law itself is free from all blame. "The commandment was ordained unto life;" and if, through transgression, it be "found to be unto death," let this awful result be attributed to its real cause, the inbred corruption of the human heart, which could convert into a deadly poison that, which, in itself, was most wholesome food, calculated to administer to the life, and health, and beauty of the soul. On sin alone let our indignation fall; against this enemy—for it is sin, and not the righteous law of God, which has wrought our ruin—let our hatred and revenge be wholly directed; and so far from suffering our detestation of it to diminish, because the sentence of death is pronounced upon us by

* Rom. vii. 7—13.

the law, let this only serve to heighten it, since but for sin, the law, which is now our accuser and our judge, would have acted only as our monitor and guide. It is not the law of God which is made death unto us: God forbid that we should think thus of his most righteous law: "but sin, that it might appear sin, working death in us by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." Let us then conclude with the Apostle, that "the law is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

To this conclusion it is absolutely necessary that we come, before we can rightly understand the glorious scheme of redemption. Any hesitation to admit the perfect rectitude and goodness of the law, demonstrates a state of mind, which wholly disqualifies us from comprehending the mercy of God in the forgiveness of sin, and the justification of the ungodly. Whatever reflects on the equity of the law, casts a shade on the grace manifested in the pardon of sins committed in violation of it. To form high conceptions of the love of God in sending his Son to redeem us from the curse of the law, we must view sin in all its native malignity; and that malignity must always bear exact proportion to the equity and goodness of the law of which it is the transgression. To represent the inability of man to obey that law in a light, which, in any degree, serves to exculpate the guilty offender, is, in

reality, to deny the grace of God in freely justifying the ungodly. That very inability to serve God is the essence of our crime; for it is in the aversion of the heart from God that our inability consists. The greater the alienation of the mind from God, the greater the inability to serve him; so that our inability, instead of affording an excuse, constitutes in truth the measure of our guilt. A proper sense of our incapacity for God's holy service, so far therefore from allaying our apprehensions of his indignation and wrath, or removing a sense of guilt from our consciences, will tend to awaken in us fresh alarm; we shall justify God, humbly acknowledge the equity of all his requirements, and take upon ourselves the whole blame of disobedience. And if, while thus filled with holy dread and shame, the redemption which is by the blood of Jesus be proclaimed in our ears, how gratefully shall we adore and magnify that love, which, while we were enemies, gave Christ to die for us. Then shall we comprehend and feel the force of that blessed record of the Saviour, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

And it is only as we apprehend sin, and not the law of God, as the true cause of our ruin, that the establishment of Christ's kingdom will

* John iii. 16.

be to us any matter of rejoicing; and that we shall regard salvation from the dominion of sin as the crowning blessing of the gospel scheme. It is such an apprehension of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, displayed in its “working death in us by that which is good,” which will alone excite in us a longing after deliverance from its cruel captivity, and lead us to cry out in the language of the Apostle, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” and in the happy prospect of deliverance, to exult with him, “I thank God through Jesus Christ.”*

From the yoke of divine authority no real penitent will ever wish to be released. He has already made full trial of that wretched freedom which is to be obtained by throwing off this most easy yoke; and has found it to be the basest and most cruel servitude. All that he gained was but an exchange of masters. And O what an exchange! He forsook the service of the blessed God, to be the slave of a most miserable apostate, who, not content with having plunged himself into the gulf of eternal perdition, by the mad attempt to shake off his allegiance to his Creator, seeks to draw after him the whole race of man by the false lure of liberty—the liberty of wearing his galling chain! Such liberty the true penitent is willing to forego; for he has learned by woeful experience, that to be “free from righteousness,”

* Rom. vii. 24, 25.

is to be "the servant of sin:" and having received in the service of sin no other wages than shame, remorse, and the fearful apprehension of the wrath to come, he prays to be "made free from sin," that he may become "the servant of righteousness."* To him the proclamation made by the messengers of peace throughout all the gates of Zion, "Thy God reigneth," is indeed "glad tidings of great joy." This "good news of the kingdom of God" fills his mind with unutterable transport. At the sound of this trumpet of Jubilee his iron fetters dissolve and fall, the doors of his prison-house burst open, and he escapes from his sad and hopeless captivity, to walk in the light and liberty of Christ. And now, having fully learned wherein true freedom consists, he is heard ever and anon repeating those words of the Psalmist, as if to assure himself of the reality and permanency of his recovered blessedness, "I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts."†

If it was the peculiar glory and felicity of the people of Israel, that they had received from God so righteous a law, is it possible to suppose, that the true Israel of God, who live under an economy of surpassing glory, are left, as some have ventured to affirm, without any such gracious intimations of the divine will? No; there is no one point of excellence, no one cause of holy

* Rom. vi. 18, 20.

† Psalm cxix. 45.

triumph and boasting to be discovered in the legal economy, in which it is not infinitely outdone by the dispensation of the Gospel. And in nothing does the glory of the latter more completely eclipse the glory of the former, than in the superiority of its mode of moral administration. In what that superiority consists will be the subject of inquiry in the following chapters.

CHAP. III.

ON THE IMPORT OF THE TERM "LAW," AS USED TO
DESIGNATE THE COVENANT OF WORKS.

"**T**HE law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."* Such are the terms used by an inspired writer of the New Testament, to define the characteristic peculiarities of the former and present dispensations. The Mosaic is characterized as *the ministration of law*; the Christian as *the ministration of grace and truth*.

To understand this important distinction, however, it will be necessary first to ascertain the sense in which the terms *law*, *grace*, and *truth*, are used in the sacred writings; since it is evident, without a clear and accurate notion of the import of these terms, the distinction intended to be expressed by them cannot possibly be comprehended. Perhaps indeed, it would not be affirming too much to say, that by far the most important mistakes, into which even wise and good men have fallen in different ages of the Christian church, in reference to the great subjects of divine

* John i. 17.

revelation, have arisen from their not clearly apprehending the precise import of these several terms as they are used by the sacred writers. But to interpret them aright, we must have recourse to the inspired volume alone: we should only be misled, by observing the usage of more modern times.

I shall therefore request the reader's attention, while I endeavour in the present and following chapters to explain the sense in which I consider the terms *law*, *grace*, and *truth*, as used in the sacred writings. And first let us inquire into the import of the term *Law*.

This term, as every attentive reader of the New Testament must have remarked, is used by the inspired writers in a variety of senses. It is sometimes employed as the appropriate denomination of the legal economy; as in the passage above quoted, "the law was given by Moses." At other times it is used simply to denote *a rule of action*, as in the clause parenthetically inserted in the following passage; "To them that are without law, as without law, (*being not without law to God, but under law to Christ,*) that I might gain them that are without law."* But here is a third sense in which the term is used, still more frequent in its occurrence, to which I would most earnestly call the attention of my readers. It is the sense in which it is used by

* 1 Cor. ix. 21.

St. Paul in the words which follow; "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace;"* where it is clear that the Apostle could neither intend the Mosaic institution on the one hand, nor a rule of action on the other; but meant simply to define the peculiar character of that glorious economy under which believers are placed as a dispensation of rich and unmerited favour, and not of strict and rigorous justice. And this latter is in truth the proper and primary sense of the term; the two former are only secondary and accommodated senses of it.

Nor let it be supposed to be a matter of very great difficulty to determine in which of these three senses it is used in any particular connection. As used synonymously with *a rule of action*, my memory furnishes me at present with no more than a single example, the one above quoted from St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. And yet, strange to think, the whole Antinomian scheme is founded on the presumption, that this is its most usual, as well as its most proper signification. That it cannot be its meaning in that well-known, but much-perverted saying of the Apostle, "Ye are not under law, but under grace," is indeed most evident, from the very consequences he deduces from this fact, or, more strictly speaking, from the position he had been

* Rom. vi. 14.

previously advancing, and which this fact is brought forward to prove; viz. *that sin shall not have dominion over believers*. And considering this sense of the term in question as thus completely disposed of, we have only to determine, whether, in any particular instance, it is used as the peculiar and appropriate denomination of the Mosaic economy, or as denoting the *character* of that dispensation *as a dispensation of law*. And in point of practice, the determination may generally be made without any great difficulty.

In most cases, I believe, when the term *law* is used to denominate the Mosaic economy, it is preceded by the definite article; when used to denote a dispensation of law, it is put absolutely, without the article. I allude, as the reader must suppose, to the original Greek, and not to our authorized version, the English translators having almost uniformly prefixed the definite article wherever the term occurs. In the following examples the article is prefixed, and the Mosaic economy is evidently intended; “The law (*ο νομος*) was given by Moses.”* “Did not Moses give you the law (*τον νομον*)?”† “Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law (*τω νομω*).”‡ “The law (*ο νομος*) was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.”§ But in the examples to be now adduced the article is wanting; and the connection in which the term is found, plainly indicates,

* John i. 17. † Ib. vii. 19. ‡ Rom. ii. 17. § Gal. iii. 24.

that it is to be understood as denoting a dispensation of law: so at least I would interpret the following passages; “Therefore by deeds of law (ἐξ ἔργων νόμος) shall no flesh living be justified;” * for it is plain the Apostle’s argument applies to Gentiles as well as to Jews. So again, “Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not *under law* (ὕπο νόμον) but under grace.” † It is the character of the dispensation under which believers are placed, as not being a dispensation of law, in other words, as not being constructed on principles of rigid justice, to which the Apostle evidently alludes. The same mode of interpretation must be resorted to in illustrating the following words; “Before faith came, we were kept *under law*, (ὕπο νόμον) shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed;” ‡ that is, in other words, were placed under an economy, the character of which was rigidly to exact perfect obedience, without affording any other aid for the discharge of duty, than merely a knowledge of it; by which means, being convinced of the utter impossibility of obtaining justification by works of law, we were prepared joyfully to receive the Gospel, “in which the righteousness of God without law is manifested, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.” § For it is plain, that what constituted

* Rom. iii. 20.

† Rom. vi. 14.

‡ Gal. iii. 23.

§ Rom. vi. 14.

the law of Moses “a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ,” as the Apostle styles it in the following verse, was its peculiar character as a dispensation of law.

In its primary acceptation then, the term law denotes *a dispensation of law*; and, as applied to the divine government, signifies that mode of administration, which is regulated on principles of strict, rigorous, and inflexible justice. Such a dispensation is characterized by the two following peculiarities; first, *by its supplying us with a clear and authoritative revelation of the will of God, enforced under severe and awful penalties*; and secondly, and which indeed is its most essential distinction, *by its rigorously exacting the penalty of disobedience, when once it has been incurred*. I request the reader's particular attention to the latter of these characteristic peculiarities, as it is this feature which chiefly distinguishes the two dispensations of Moses and Christ; the former, according to its original constitution, rigorously exacting the penalty of disobedience; the latter graciously remitting it on those merciful conditions which it prescribes. They both agree in furnishing us with a rule of duty, and in enforcing obedience to it under pain of divine displeasure: they differ principally in this, that, under the covenant of works, no provision was made for the remission of sins; under the covenant of grace, the true penitent is graciously forgiven.

The term *law* is, as I have already observed, frequently used by the sacred writers to denote *a dispensation of law generally*; in which mode of applying it, it signifies, not the Mosaic law, but simply a mode of moral administration conducted on principles of strict justice, under which every one receives his just due, whether it be of praise or blame, of reward or punishment. Such appears to be its meaning in those words of St. Paul, “Ye are not under law, but under grace;” which may be thus paraphrased, ‘Ye are not placed under a dispensation of severe and impartial justice, which exacts sinless obedience as the indispensable condition of a continuance in the divine favour, and in case of one single act of disobedience, calls for the death of the offender; but under a dispensation, which, according to the very constitution of it, allows, under specified conditions, of the pardon of sin, and by the powerful aid it affords in the timely and efficacious succours of the Spirit, strengthens us to do the whole will of God.’

Under such a dispensation was Adam, the father and federal head of all mankind, originally placed. For the prohibition, “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,”* comprehended, agreeably to the first branch of the above definition of the term *law*, a clear and authoritative revelation of the will

* Gen. ii. 17.

of God, enforced under a severe and awful penalty. And the rigour with which the penalty of disobedience was exacted, when it had been incurred by a single transgression, forms a melancholy, yet instructive comment on the second branch of that definition. For we are told, that “by one offence (δι ενος παραπτώματος, improperly rendered by our translators, ‘by the offence of one,’) judgment came upon all men to condemnation.”*

This dispensation of law, under which Adam was placed, extends its authority over all his posterity, until, by faith in Christ, they are placed under another and more gracious dispensation. The curse of the law incurred by Adam’s one offence, has descended through him upon all his posterity; “By one man’s disobedience the many (οι πολλοι) were made sinners.”† “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”‡ Such is the language of inspiration on this awful subject. And the history of mankind furnishes, alas! too strong a confirmation of its truth. To this history St. Paul himself appeals, and the conclusion he teaches us to draw from it is this, that “by *deeds of law*,” that is, according to principles of strict and impartial justice, which assign to every man reward or punishment, in exact proportion to his merit or

* Rom. v. 18.

† Ibid. 19.

‡ Ibid. 12.

demerit, "there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God."*

And the Mosaic economy, *according to its original institution*, was, in the strictest sense of the terms, a dispensation of law; that is to say, was framed on principles of rigid justice. I say, according to its original institution; for, as we shall soon have occasion to remark, it subsequently underwent great modification.

A studious and observant reader of the writings of Moses, will scarcely have failed to remark a wide difference between the law which was proclaimed by the mouth of Jehovah on Mount Sinai, and that law, which Moses, in the character of Mediator, (in which doubtless he was intended to typify the blessed Redeemer, at once our Mediator and our King,) afterwards delivered to the people of Israel. Many and very important lines of distinction are to be observed between them; and which, if well understood, elucidate, in a very striking manner, the essential characteristics of the two dispensations of law and grace; and prove, beyond a doubt, that so far is a dispensation of grace from excluding the notion of a rule, that it necessarily involves it; and, indeed, since man's apostacy, lays the only foundation for the exercise of divine authority over him. It is only through a Mediator, who is at once their Priest and their King, that God can,

* Rom. iii. 20.

consistently with that perfect rectitude which belongs to his moral administration, reign over the sinful, offending, guilty children of men. Without such a merciful intervention, their imperfect obedience could not be rewarded with his gracious approbation: on the contrary, every act of transgression must be visited with his righteous displeasure.

The *first* peculiarity, then, to be noticed in the law of Mount Sinai, is *the awful terrors amidst which it was proclaimed*. It was attended with thunderings, and lightnings, and thick darkness, and flaming fire, and the smoke as of a furnace, that God came down to deliver his fiery law. And such dismay did it create among the people of Israel, that they fled from the mountain, and stood afar off; and said unto Moses, “*Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.*”* To this prayer God was propitious; “*I have heard,*” said he to Moses, “*the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken;*”† upon which he proceeds to appoint Moses to his mediatorial office; giving to him a variety of instructions and commands, and commissioning him to make them known to the people. Who, that has read the history of this solemn transaction, but must have remarked the characteristic difference between

* Exodus xx. 19.

† Deut. v. 28.

these two dispensations of law—for such they may truly be styled—the one given by the mouth of God himself, the other through the ministry of Moses? The people of Israel little understood, it may be, the full import of their own request; but it amounted to an acknowledgment, that, under a dispensation of strict and impartial justice, no man can live. This conviction, the terrible majesty in which Jehovah appeared to declare his will, was, doubtless, designed to produce. The approbation which God expressed of his people's request, sufficiently indicates this. Happy, indeed, had it been for them, had the terror, which extorted from them that request, arisen from a just sense of their own utter inability to serve God acceptably on the condition of a covenant of works, such as was the law of Mount Sinai, which demanded perfect and sinless obedience, and which, in case of one single transgression, consigned the offender to remediless perdition. Unhappily for them, however, their fear arose from a servile dread of what the power of Jehovah might do, rather than from a humble conviction of what his justice ought to inflict upon them as children of disobedience and wrath. No sooner, therefore, had the thunderings and lightnings ceased, than their self-confidence returned, their fears subsided, and the law afterwards delivered to them through a mediator was identified and confounded with that fiery law, the promulgation of which by

the mouth of God himself had inspired them with so much dread. And to this present hour their posterity continue under the same wilful blindness. Their pride of heart, their utter ignorance of the righteousness which the law of God requires for justification, and their insensibility to their own wretched condition as the bond-slaves of iniquity, will not allow them to perceive the design so clearly expressed by every circumstance attending the giving of the law, nor to understand the lesson so plainly taught, that "by deeds of law no flesh living can be justified."

The *second* peculiarity observable in the law of Mount Sinai, and by which it is essentially distinguished from the law afterwards delivered to the people by the ministry of Moses, is *its absolute inflexibility*. Its language was, "this do, and thou shalt live;" but then it exacted perfect obedience. It admitted not of the smallest failure. *One* act of disobedience exposed the offender to its righteous curse. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die,"* was its awful threatening. It made no provision for the expiation of sin. It was to another, and more gracious covenant, that the law of sacrifices appertained; and that promises of pardon and reconciliation on repentance were made to such as might have offended. This distinction it is very important that the reader should observe. He who has overlooked it, has

* Ezekiel xviii. 4.

lost much useful instruction, which he would otherwise have derived from the writings of Moses.

The rigid inflexibility of the law given from Mount Sinai, was strikingly and awfully illustrated very shortly after its promulgation. No sooner had God's chosen people broken his holy law, by making for themselves a golden calf, than the wrath of Jehovah was kindled against them. "I have seen this people," said the Lord unto Moses, "and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them: and I will make of thee a great nation."* And it was only at the intercession of Moses, that their sin was pardoned. And what was the plea urged by this powerful intercessor? Did he attempt to palliate their crime? Did he urge, as a motive for their forgiveness, that this was but their *first*, their *only* offence? that if pardoned, they would repent; and, warned by their former awful situation as condemned criminals, whom mercy alone had spared, would be careful for the future to yield a more perfect obedience? No; nothing of this nature escapes the lips of their mediator. Moses knew too well the inflexible severity with which law must exact a compliance with its demands; or, in case of disobedience, visit on the offender its awful curse, to urge such a plea! The people of Israel had sinned; and the law had said, "The soul that

* Exodus xxxii. 9, 10.

sinneth, it shall die." To have urged such a plea on their behalf, would therefore in reality have been, to have cast a reflection on the equity of the law. But how could Moses hope for success, if he admitted their guilt in its full extent? Was there any expedient to be found, which should at once vindicate the justice of God, demonstrate the equity of his law, and, at the same time, allow of the forgiveness of the guilty offender? There was; and of this Moses avails himself. Acknowledging the justice with which God might punish his people with utter extinction, as he had threatened he would do, he pleads the gracious covenant which God had formerly made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the very terms of which provision was made for the forgiveness of sin. "O Lord God," said he, "destroy not thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand. *Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*: look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin; lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness. Yet they are thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by

thy mighty power, and by thy stretched-out arm."^{*}

To this intercessory prayer the Lord hearkened, and "repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people."[†]

And here I cannot omit remarking, how entirely dissimilar is the language which Jehovah employs during the short period that the Sinaitic Covenant subsisted in force, to that which he used after the renewal of the Covenant of Grace, originally made with the patriarch Abraham. During this temporary subsistence of the strict legal dispensation, and before this renewal of the Abrahamic covenant, God spake to his people in these awfully admonitory terms; "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for *he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.*"[‡] But when the Sinaitic covenant was virtually at an end, the people of Israel having all, without exception, incurred the sentence of excision, and having been pardoned at the intercession of Moses, and in consideration of God's ancient covenant with Abraham; and when therefore this more gracious covenant might be said to be confirmed with his posterity; proclaims his name, "The Lord, the Lord God, *merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant*

* Deut. ix. 26—29. † Exodus xxxii. 14. ‡ Ibid. xxiii. 20, 21.

in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."* And having thus proclaimed his mercy and grace, God proceeds to make a new covenant with his people;† plainly intimating that the former had been already annulled. And an attentive reader of the book of Deuteronomy will observe the pains which Moses takes to convince the people of Israel, that they were now no longer under a dispensation of rigid and inflexible justice; and, therefore, were admitted to the possession of Canaan, not on the terms of the covenant of Mount Sinai—for they had broken that covenant, and had already received the sentence of excision; although afterwards they had been graciously spared at the intercession of Moses—but on the terms of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He will also observe, that obedience to Jehovah is *now* enforced by arguments derived from this renewed covenant of grace; "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in

* Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7.

† Ibid. 10.

number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; *but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers*, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Know, *therefore*, that the Lord thy God, he is God, the *faithful* God, which *keepeth* COVENANT and *mercy* with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him; he will repay him to his face. Thou shalt *therefore* keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.”*

This passage, which I have quoted so fully, abounds with very important instruction. It exhibits, in the clearest light, the essential distinction between a covenant of law, and a covenant of grace; and completely overthrows the unfounded assertion, that exemption from the yoke of divine authority is the discriminating characteristic of a dispensation of grace. On the contrary, we have here a renewal of God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and, so far is Jehovah from relinquishing his claim to the love and obedience of his people, that he exacts it as the condition, on which alone they could expect to enjoy the bene-

* Dent. vii. 6—11.

fits of that covenant; “*he keepeth covenant and mercy,*” says Moses, “*with them that love him, and keep his commandments;*” nor are the disobedient and rebellious encouraged to look for any other fruit of their iniquity than his fiery indignation: “*he repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them:* he will not be slack to him that hateth him; *he will repay him to his face.*” But if, under this new covenant, sin be so severely punished, where is the boasted grace of it? In what does it differ from a covenant of law? A true child of God will readily give an answer to these questions. For while he rejoices in the testimony of his own conscience, that he loves God, and delights in his statutes, “esteeming God’s precepts to be right, and hating every false way;” he knows at the same time, that in many things he daily offends; so that were he to be judged by the rule of strict righteousness, he could not be acquitted, but must stand exposed to the righteous severity of God; but, being placed under an economy of grace, which, at the same time that it enjoins love to God and obedience to his will as indispensably necessary to the enjoyment of its covenanted blessings, promises pardon of sin to the truly contrite, he cherishes a humble assurance of his future blessedness; for, notwithstanding his acknowledged deficiencies, his conscience still bears him testimony that he loves God, and takes delight in his ways. But on this subject I shall

have occasion to observe again, when explaining the import of the terms “ grace” and “ truth.”

From the preceding remarks, the intelligent reader will not be led to confound the covenant of grace thus renewed with the people of Israel, with that covenant as afterwards fully and completely ratified and confirmed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It was, after all, but a typical and shadowy dispensation of mercy and grace of which Moses was appointed mediator. The *law* or rule of obedience prescribed by him, (excepting indeed the two great commandments) was typical of the obedience of the heart which Messiah would afterwards inculcate on his people: The *sacrifices* appointed to expiate sins committed in violation of that law, were typical of the great sacrifice to be made once for all in the end of the world: The *blessings* promised to the obedient were typical of the heavenly Canaan; and the *curses* denounced against obstinate and impenitent transgressors were but types of that tremendous doom to which the wicked will be consigned by the Judge of all at the great and final day. Widely, therefore, as the covenant of grace made with the people of Israel through the mediation of Moses, differed from the covenant of law given from Mount Sinai, still it was grace *only in types and shadows*. It afforded indeed a lively representation, and, to the eye of a believing Israelite who looked to the end of that which was shortly

to be abolished, a most cheering and delightful image, of the kingdom of grace afterwards to be erected by the promised Messiah; but this was all. It was glorious only by the glories, which, as a faithful mirror, it reflected. It shone only with a borrowed light.

Before, however, I dismiss the consideration of the peculiar characteristics of the law of Moses, I must observe, that even under the more gracious form in which it was renewed, after the covenant of Mount Sinai had been virtually annulled, it presented nothing but “the *form* of knowledge and of the truth,”* to use the expressive language of the Apostle. It marked out clearly and distinctly the line of duty; it held out most powerful encouragements to love and obedience; it graciously promised pardon to the truly contrite on their turning to the Lord with sincere penitence; and, though it threatened to punish sin, yet it did not, like the law of Mount Sinai, denounce utter extinction for every offence; but blending mercy even with judgment, sought the correction and restoration of the offender by the very stripes it inflicted; consigning only presumptuous and hardened offenders over to remediless perdition: but still one thing was wanting to render this law of grace, if I may so denominate it, operative and effectual; I mean *the spirit of grace*. Like the light of the moon, it possessed no vital warmth.

* Rom. ii. 20.

It is the prerogative of "the Sun of righteousness" alone to quicken into life. Among all the glorious distinctions of the second covenant made with the people of Israel by which it surpassed the first, *the promise of the Spirit* was not found. And for want of this, it proved unavailing, and was at length itself superseded. And now a still better covenant is made by God with his people, established upon better promises; a covenant which exhibits the grace and mercy of God, not in types and figures, but in all their own native plenitude, and divine reality. Of this new covenant the prophet Jeremiah gave promise to such as waited for the consolation of Israel; "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband to them, saith the Lord;) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.* And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; *for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them,* saith

the Lord: for I will *forgive their iniquity*, and I will *remember their sin no more*.”* What was wanting in the covenant made with Israel—the *spirit of grace*—is here supplied. By the ministry of Moses, the children of Israel received God’s righteous law, engraven on tablets of stone; but here God promises to write it on their hearts; and this promise, the Mediator of this new covenant has been fulfilling from the day of Pentecost to the present hour. “He ascended on high, that he might receive gifts for men, that the Lord God might dwell amongst them.”†

It was the want of this spirit of grace, which rendered the ministration of the law, even under its more gracious form, the ministration only of condemnation. For even under that amended form, it did no more than simply prescribe a rule of action for the observance of such as were placed under its authority; nor could its equity on the one hand, nor its mild and gentle administration on the other, secure obedience to it; a fact which will occasion no surprise to such as know, that something further is necessary, besides the mere knowledge of the will of God, or even an inward conviction of the equity of his requirements, to secure our obedience. We must not only know and approve; but, to keep God’s commandments, we must love them. They must be more

* Jer. xxxi. 31—34.

† Psalm lxviii. 18.

precious in our esteem, than thousands of gold and silver; they must be sweeter to our taste than honey, or the honey-comb. In short, to use the language of the Prophet Jeremiah, they must be written on *the heart*. And this the finger of God alone can perform. To change the heart is his glorious prerogative. And until this gracious change is effected, no man will ever delight in God's holy law. On the contrary, the more he discovers of its purity and spirituality, the greater will be his aversion to it. Ignorant of its real nature, he may pretend, like the Pharisees, and like St. Paul, before his conversion, to respect its authority; and, by an outward compliance with its demands, may cherish the vain hope of justification by his obedience to it; but let the commandment be exhibited before him in all its vast extent, as requiring the obedience of the heart; and the strength of inbred corruption will soon appear: sin, which before lay dormant and inactive, and to all appearance dead, will rouse itself from its seeming lethargy, assert its dominion over the heart, and bind in chains of adamant strength, the man who, till then, was fondly dreaming, and proudly boasting of his freedom. Happy the man who is thus awakened to a just sense of his real condition. The discovery may be mortifying to his pride, and alarming to his conscience; but it is necessary to his salvation. Without so humbling and painful a conviction, he

will despise and reject the grace of the gospel: but being made sensible of his state of captivity to sin and death, he will cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"*

Such then is the true character of a *dispensation of law*; imparting to men the knowledge of God's will, but affording them no aid for the performance of it; requiring a perfect obedience to its commands, and, in case of disobedience, rigorously exacting the penalty incurred. Under such an economy, who among the sons of Adam can hope to live? Is there one who dares adventure his eternal safety on the condition of perfect obedience required by the terms of it? Alas, there are to be found many, who, madly presuming on their ability to satisfy the requirements of the law, scorn and reject the grace offered them in the gospel. They will be indebted to justice, and not to mercy, for their final acquittal at the bar of God. To plead *guilty* is what their pride cannot brook. To be placed on the same level with the vilest of malefactors, whom the mercy of God has pardoned, and his Spirit sanctified and saved, excites in them the most lively indignation. 'What, (say they,) and are we no better than the most reprobate and abandoned of mankind? Is there no merit in our scrupulous observance of the rules of conduct prescribed and recommended

* Rom. vii. 24.

by the virtuous of all ages? Is it not better to practise those rules, than to live in the daily violation of them? Are temperance, sobriety, chastity, honesty, and beneficence, no better than debauchery, sensuality, fraud, and oppression? It cannot be. The God of justice and of truth, must make a distinction. He must approve the one, he must condemn the other. But to place all mankind on a level, requiring all alike to plead guilty before God, is utterly to confound light and darkness, good and evil; is to overturn the very foundations of moral government, to destroy every motive to virtue, to remove every impediment to vice. Since all are equally acceptable to God, what better maxim than this, "Let us sin, that grace may abound?" If God must receive the whole glory of our salvation, we may surely spare ourselves the labour we have been taught to consider as so necessary to secure it.

They who thus argue, little know what they say, nor whereof they affirm. The dispensations of law and grace, of which they speak in such reproachful terms, are wholly free from those fatal consequences, which they, misled by their pride and haughtiness of heart, scruple not thus rashly and impiously to impute to them. God is not the author of confusion. The great distinctions of right and wrong, of good and evil, were never intended by him to be destroyed. Neither his law, nor his gospel, are chargeable with enfeebling

the motives to obedience, or silencing the voice of conscience, or hardening a sinner in his crimes. The charge is false; and, when thoroughly examined, reflects only shame and infamy on those who are weak and wicked enough to advance it.

As this subject is very important, and lies at the very foundation of all saving knowledge of divine truth, the reader will excuse me, if I occupy a few pages, in endeavouring to place it in its proper light. And the remarks which have already been made, on the discriminating characteristics of a dispensation of law, will assist us in removing every difficulty with which it has been artfully incumbered.

The question at issue between those who maintain, and those who deny, the possibility of justification before God by works of our own, is *not* whether a course of virtuous action be not in itself more commendable than a course of vice: for certainly this cannot for a moment be disputed. The temporal benefits naturally attendant on the one, and the pains and miseries consequent on the other, plainly and unequivocally declare, what sentiments God would have us entertain respecting them. Had he been totally indifferent which course we pursued, he would not have hedged up the path of vice with so many thorns. Nor is he indifferent. Nature, providence, his law, his gospel, all alike disclaim the impious thought. The true question to be decided is,

Can God, acting as the governor of the world, and proceeding on principles of justice alone, acquit a transgressor of his righteous law? Can he, consistently with the purity, and perfect rectitude of his moral administration, accept of an imperfect obedience? Or, must he not, on the other hand, inflict the sentence of the law on all who have transgressed his law, were it only in a single instance? If the remarks above made on the covenants of law entered into with Adam in Paradise, and with the Israelites in the Wilderness, be just,—and I can anticipate no valid objection to them,—then these questions admit of but one answer. For it appears, that, for his “*one* offence, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” When Adam partook of the forbidden fruit, he broke the sole condition on which the continuance of his being and blessedness was suspended. His former acts of obedience are neither pleaded by himself in extenuation of his guilt, nor so much as alluded to by his righteous Judge, when having summoned him into his presence, he graciously extended to him the sceptre of mercy. His perfect obedience to the will of God prior to his fall, is never specified as constituting the least part of the consideration, if I may be allowed the expression, which induced his maker not rigorously to exact the forfeited penalty of life. And yet, surely, the sinless obedience of our great progenitor prior to his fall,

would have furnished a far better plea, a much stronger motive for extending mercy to him, than can be found in the holiest life ever since spent by any one of his posterity. In him, before he fell by transgression, even the piercing eye of deity could detect no sin. Infinite purity regarded him with complacency and love. And will, then, any of his degenerate offspring, who daily offend against God; who in thought, word, and deed are hourly transgressing his holy law; whose "imaginations have been from their youth up, evil, only evil, and that continually;"—will they, I say, presume to trust for their acceptance with God, on an obedience itself deserving his displeasure? If they can fairly challenge the justice of God for their final acquittal at his bar; they who were born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and who, from their earliest infancy, have been estranged from God, and enemies to him by wicked works; with what confidence might not their once pure, perfect, and sinless progenitor have approached his Judge to solicit the forgiveness of his *one* offence! But when God appeared, the first transgressor stood silent before him. And when God shall come again to judgment, "the whole world will stand *guilty* before God." The sight of the holy, righteous, heart-searching God, will silence every transgressor; nor will any then attempt to ask of infinite justice, what their pride now scorns to accept at the hands of mercy.

It is from not apprehending the real nature of a dispensation of law, that any can presume to expect justification by works of their own. They do not, or will not observe, that to be justified by works, they must yield *a perfect and sinless obedience* to the law. Nothing short of this will satisfy its demands. A covenant of law cannot, from its very nature, allow of the smallest deficiency. For the principle on which it is framed is that of strict, severe, and impartial justice; so that one deviation from the line of rectitude, is sufficient to incur its awful penalty; and if that penalty be once incurred, the law cannot be satisfied until it be paid. This indeed is the character of human laws, when wisely framed and righteously administered: or if in any particular instance they are not thus characterized, it is because they are radically defective. It is a universally acknowledged principle in legislation, that no penalty ought to be denounced, which the lawgiver does not intend should be rigorously exacted; since it is the certainty of punishment which clothes it with all its terror. The slightest hope of escaping with impunity, holds out encouragement to transgress. The denunciation of the law is heard; but, as it is possible that it may not be executed, it is treated as an idle threat: and thus, the majesty of the law, which ought to inspire with awe and dread, is contemned, insulted and defied. Can we then

impute to the omniscient God, who sees effects in their remotest causes, an error, which even human legislators would be most careful to avoid? Can we think that the great Ruler of heaven and earth, would commit an act of treason against his own authority and government, and set the example to his creatures of bidding defiance to his own awful threatenings? Yet this we must suppose, were we to imagine, that one violation of his holy law ought to go unpunished, in consideration of the otherwise merit of the offender. What is this but to say, that the law, which refuses to be satisfied with any thing short of perfect obedience, is unjust? And yet, have we not shewn, that this is the character of the law? nay, that this was the very principle of that righteous sentence which doomed Adam and all his posterity to death? We have. To deny the rectitude of the principle itself, is, therefore, to reflect, not merely on the law as too severe, but on its great Author as having actually been guilty of the grossest injustice. If God was just in adjudging the race of man to condemnation for the one offence of the first Adam,—and who dares to charge him with injustice?—then the principle itself is just, and all hopes of justification founded on an obedience which is confessedly imperfect must vanish for ever. It is only by supposing that principle of divine administration

unjust, that such hopes can be defended as either reasonable or safe.

Is there then no way of reconciling the claims of justice with those of mercy? Must the law of God take its course, and the penalty of disobedience incurred by every child of Adam be exacted to the very letter of the awful threatening, without any possibility of remission? God forbid any should think, that they, who maintain the inadequacy of works of law to justify us before God, are driven into so appalling a dilemma. On the very contrary, their happy acquaintance with that merciful provision which God has made for freely justifying the ungodly, not only removes that dread with which the thought of judgment must ever recur to a transgressor of the law, but fills their minds with a holy and heavenly peace. And such is the wisdom with which this mercy is shewn to the guilty children of men, that no one to whom it is extended, ever entertains less exalted thoughts of the equity of the law by which he stood condemned, feels less abhorrence of sin, or cherishes feebler desires after conformity to the holy will of God. On the contrary, so greatly has "God abounded in wisdom and prudence" in the plan of human redemption, that, by the very act which justifies the ungodly, he has contrived to magnify his law, and to assert the claims of his righteous authority. In extending

mercy and forgiveness to the offender, he renders him more sensible of the enormity of his offence, than by inflicting upon him the just punishment of his sin; and the repentance to which this exercise of mercy leads him, is not that selfish "sorrow of the world" which is nourished by despair, and "which worketh death;" no, but a godly sorrow, wrought in the mind by unexpected, undeserved kindness, which every recollection of the mercy it has received awakens and renews; and which having now no longer any cause of fearful apprehension, is unmingled with a selfish feeling, and bewails only the number and turpitude of its offences, rousing the soul to implacable revenge against its sins.

To develope this mystery of wisdom and grace will be the business of the following chapters, in which I propose to consider the import of the terms *grace* and *truth*.

CHAP. IV.

ON THE IMPORT OF THE TERMS GRACE AND TRUTH, AS USED BY THE SACRED WRITERS TO DEFINE THE PECULIAR CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION.

THE inquiry already instituted into the import of the term *law* will be found very greatly to assist us in investigating the precise meaning of the terms *grace* and *truth*; and to fix the sense in which we are to understand those well-known, but by many much perverted words of the Apostle, “Ye are not under law, but under grace.”

We have seen that *law*, in its primary acceptation, denotes *a dispensation of law*; that is, in other words, a mode of divine administration carried on by means of a law clearly defining the nature and extent of the service required, and rigidly exacting the penalty of disobedience when once it has been incurred. We have seen, that this was the character both of the dispensation under which Adam was originally placed, and of that first covenant made with the children of Israel after their redemption from the house of bondage. We have also seen, that while the law of Mount Sinai was characterized by every

peculiarity belonging to law in its strictest form, the law subsequently delivered to the same people through the mediation of Moses, was in reality a shadowy dispensation of grace, being engrafted on the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and admitting, contrary to the essential nature of a dispensation of law, of the pardon and restoration of the offender on his repentance and return to God. We have seen, that the grace of this second covenant consisted, not in the abandonment of his authority on the part of Jehovah, in his relinquishing his claims to the love and obedience of his people, and suffering them to walk in future each one after the desires and devices of his own heart; but in graciously remitting the penalty they had already incurred by their breach of the first covenant, and in placing them under a milder administration, the principles of which required not a rigorous exaction of the penalty of disobedience, but allowed of its being graciously remitted on condition of sincere repentance. We have seen, that while under this covenant of grace, God promises to “keep covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments,” he threatens to “repay those that hate him to their face;” and that, while he proclaims his name, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving

iniquity and transgression and sin," he declares, that he "will by no means clear the guilty, but will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." We have seen, that even this gracious covenant entirely failed of securing the obedience of such as were placed under it; that, merciful as the terms of it were, one thing was wanting to give them effect—the spirit of grace: and that, in consequence of this radical deficiency, even this covenant is abolished, and a new covenant substituted in its room, by the terms of which that spirit of grace which was required to give efficacy to the revealed will of God, and to ensure obedience to it, is promised to God's people.

Now to my mind it appears impossible, that, after seeing all this, the true character of the gospel dispensation should not be distinctly perceived; or, that the import of the terms *grace* and *truth* employed by John to define the nature of that economy, should not be clearly apprehended. Who but must see, that *grace* refers to that peculiarity of the administration established by our blessed Lord and Saviour, which stands in direct opposition to the distinguishing characteristic of the *first* covenant made with the people of Israel; viz. to the remission of that penalty incurred by all the

children of Adam, and which it is the essential character of law rigidly to exact: and that *truth* stands also opposed to the shadowy nature of the *second* covenant made with the people of Israel; in which covenant was exhibited to the eye of faith, in types and figures, an emblematic representation of the divine realities of Messiah's future kingdom? The impossibility of arriving at any other conclusion will more clearly appear as we proceed.

Before I enter, however, into a more minute investigation of the discriminating characteristics of the economy under which all true believers are placed, I must advertise the reader not to expect a separate discussion of the terms *grace* and *truth*; or that these terms will in future be used in their strict and primary acceptation, according to the above definition of them. This would be impracticable, and I may add, useless. The sacred writers themselves do not invariably employ these terms in one and the same sense, but in various senses. And yet this want of uniformity is very far from occasioning any real obscurity in their writings. The different shades of meaning are easily distinguished; and it is very seldom indeed that an intelligent reader, after attentively considering the particular connection in which either of these terms is found, can be long at a loss to determine the sense in which it was used, and intended to be understood, by the sacred writer.

Generally speaking, the term *grace* denotes *the principle on which the government of Messiah is administered*: in which respect it strikingly agrees with the principle of administration adopted by Jehovah when he entered into covenant the second time with the people of Israel. But it is by no means confined to this sense. It is also used to express what I have before observed to be intended by the word *truth*; and hence it frequently denotes the gift of the Spirit, by whose mighty energy the corruptions of our nature are subdued, and we are brought to love and delight in, as well as to know and approve, the will of God.

The word *truth* occurs less frequently. But that it does occur, and that in the sense in which I have above explained it, many passages might be adduced to prove; in the greater number of which I apprehend *the dominion of Christ in the heart, as exerted by the power of his Spirit*, is intended. As for example; “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know *the truth*, and *the truth shall make you free*.”*—“Sanctify them by thy *truth*; *thy word is truth*.”†—“For this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto *the truth*: every one that is of *the truth* heareth my voice.”‡ Other passages might be quoted, in which it bears the same signification. At other times it relates to Christ himself as the great

* John viii. 31, 32. † Ibid. xvii. 17. ‡ Ibid. xviii. 37.

reality prefigured by all the types and shadows of the law; as for example, “grace and *truth* came by Jesus Christ.”*—“I am the way, and *the truth*, and the life;”†—“which hast the form of knowledge and of *the truth* in the law.”‡ In short, I may observe, that the word *truth* is often used in one or other of these senses, when possibly a careless reader might consider it as synonymous either with *doctrine* or with *sincerity*. I will only mention one; “the time cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in *truth*,”§ by which latter word we are to understand, not *sincerity*, as is too generally supposed; but the true and spiritual temple, into which by faith believers in Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, have freedom of access, and where, as priests unto God, they daily offer up spiritual sacrifices.

Having made these preliminary remarks, I hasten to the consideration of the subject more immediately in view—the peculiar characteristics of the economy of grace. And from what has been already observed, in relation to the law of Moses, they seem capable of being arranged under the following threefold division;—first, the free and full remission of the penalty incurred by the violation of the covenant of works;—secondly, the gift of the Holy Spirit to enable the believer in Christ both to will and to do

* John i. 17. † Ibid. xiv. 6. ‡ Rom. ii. 20. § John iv. 23.

according to God's good pleasure;—and thirdly, the gracious forgiveness of those daily offences which even the regenerate commit against Christ, at once the *Lord* and Saviour of his people. Each of these distinguishing peculiarities of the covenant of grace will afford many very interesting topics for meditation; and I am greatly deceived, if the reader should rise from the contemplation of them, without deriving from it some confirmation of his faith, his hope, and his love; without finding it “profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.”

CHAP. V.

ON THE FIRST PECULIARITY OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE; VIZ. THE REMISSION OF THE PENALTY INCURRED BY THE BREACH OF THE COVENANT OF WORKS.

WE have before observed, that, at his first creation, man was placed under a dispensation of law, according to the condition of which life became forfeited by the very first offence; and that this condition having been broken, “judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” The whole of Adam’s posterity, therefore, are involved in the awful consequences of the fall. That every child of Adam is a child of disobedience, his own conscience bears testimony; nor will any one pretend, that he is perfectly free from sin. All must and do acknowledge, that in many things they daily offend; and would they follow up this admission to its legitimate consequence, they must also acknowledge, that “by deeds of law no flesh living can be justified.” For, let it be remembered, it is not necessary to constitute a man guilty in the eye of the law, that he should be what the world would pronounce an incorrigible offender; *one* offence is sufficient to entail

its curse. The language of the law is, “cursed is every one *who continueth not in all things* written in the book of the law to do them;”^{*} and again it is written, “whosoever shall *keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point*, he is guilty of all.”[†]

How then can man be just with God? This must ever be the first inquiry of an awakened sinner. From the law he can expect nothing but the sentence of condemnation. The law can know nothing of mercy. To the guilty it is inexorable, and must ever remain so. Not one iota of its demands can be relinquished. Either obedience must be rendered to them in their full extent, or else the penalty of disobedience must be paid. To yield the former is now become impossible, since no future diligence or care will compensate for past transgressions. And to pay the penalty, is to die and perish for ever. Will then the pure and righteous God recede from the strictness of his original demands? or voluntarily forego his title to the forfeited penalty? No; “heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one iota or tittle of his law shall fail.” Life has been forfeited, and life must be paid. But if God do not recede from his demands, or else forego his title to the penalty of transgression, how can he extend mercy to the guilty? Is there any possibility of satisfying the claims of his broken

^{*} Gal. iii. 10.

[†] James ii. 10.

law, and at the same time of acquitting the transgressor? Yes, blessed be God, his infinite wisdom has devised, and his boundless love and grace have provided, such an expedient; so that God can now be just in justifying the ungodly. And this glorious contrivance of the wisdom of God is made known to us in the gospel: for “therein is the righteousness of God which is by faith, revealed to faith.”*

Before I proceed, however, to unfold this amazing plan of divine wisdom for the justification of the ungodly, I would just observe, by way of anticipation, that *redemption from the curse of the law* forms only one part of it. Justification comprehends two things, both of which are equally essential to its perfection; first, *an acquittal from the charge of guilt*; and secondly, *an acknowledgment of title to life*, the promised reward of righteousness. What we are now about to consider, is only the former of these; the latter will be fully explained, when we come to investigate the second peculiarity of the covenant of grace.

How then, it will be asked, has God contrived to satisfy the rigid claims of his violated law? I answer, by sending his only begotten Son to pay the penalty of disobedience. For none but he could pay that penalty. For the penalty was *death*. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” And there was no possibility that the law should any

* Rom. i. 17.

more remit any part of this awful penalty, than that it should recede from any one of its righteous demands. It must in all things be fulfilled. The sentence of death pronounced by it, however tremendous in its consequences, must be inflicted. But where could one be found, either able or willing to sustain its weight? Who, that was aware of the malignity of sin, of God's utter detestation of it, of his fixed and irrevocable purpose to avenge the honour of his insulted law; and, consequently, of the terrible expressions of his righteous indignation which *he* would have to endure, who should undertake to pay the sinner's ransom, would have dared to offer himself as an expiatory sacrifice for sin? The price of pardon was *blood*, that is, *life*. "Without shedding of blood there could be no remission." This divine justice had irreversibly decreed. But if life itself was to be paid in satisfaction of the penalty of man's disobedience, none could make such payment, but at the certain loss of their own eternal blessedness. To die, would, to a creature, have been to have perished for ever. Even supposing the life of the highest of all created intelligences had been deemed a sufficient satisfaction, still it is evident, nothing short of life could have been accepted. To such a being, therefore, the loss sustained must have been irreparable. For how was it to be repaired? Being a mere creature, it is plain, he could not

have restored himself to life, by virtue of any energy of his own, as our blessed Redeemer did. And had the life he had paid in satisfaction of the demands of the law been restored to him, the penalty would have been actually remitted. For death, the sentence of the law, is the utter extinction of life. But this would have been merely a temporary suspension of it. So that, it is plain, no created being, even had it been possible for divine justice to have allowed of such a substitution, could have paid the forfeited penalty without perishing for ever. But the very statement of so tremendous a consequence is enough to shew, that the justice of God could not have consented to it, had it even been actually proposed. There would have been so manifest an incongruity, not to say injustice, in punishing with an eternal loss of being and blessedness, one who loved God with such intensity of affection, that, to honour the purity and equity of his law, he was willing to die to preserve it unsullied; while he conferred life, and glory, and felicity on such as had lifted up against him the arm of rebellion, that even, were it imagined possible that any created being could have offered himself as the substitute of sinners, divine justice could not have allowed the substitution.

How then is the required expiation to be made? Behold the wisdom and the love of God! Since no other means of redemption could be

found, he gives his only begotten Son to die for the ungodly! Herein, indeed, is love! But will the Son himself consent to this wondrous plan of rescuing apostate rebels? Will he submit to pay the penalty of their offences, and to redeem them from the curse, endure that curse himself? Or if he consent, how is he to pay it? Himself spiritual, immortal, impassible; the fountain of life, of being, and of blessedness, how can he suffer, and bleed, and die?

Amazing grace! The Son of God consents to be made an offering for sin. "Deliver him from going down to the pit," says he, "I have found a ransom."* And "because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same."† To capacitate himself to suffer and to die, he submits to veil his glories in human flesh. A body is prepared for him; and in the fulness of time he comes forth from the Father, and comes into the world to tabernacle with men. And when the hour is come that expiation is to be made, the sword of justice is unsheathed, and amidst the silence of wondering angels, these awful words are pronounced, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and smite the man that is mine associate."‡ This sentence pronounced, the Son of God is delivered up into the hands of wicked men. And though they could have had no power over him, had it

* Job xxxiii. 24.

† Heb. ii. 14.

‡ Zech. xiii. 7.

not been thus given them from above; yet, having been permitted by God to afflict him, they put him to a cruel and ignominious death, after having first offered him every possible indignity. And didst thou, adorable Redeemer, endure all this at the hands of wicked men, the very objects of thy grace and compassion? Astonishing mystery of love! Yes, thou didst; and more than this, with thine expiring breath thou didst pray for thy murderers; “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”*

But it was not by the hands of men alone that the sentence of eternal justice was executed. No; the sword of divine indignation itself smote him. In the hour of death, it was not the nails, the thorns, or the spear, which extorted from him the piercing cry he uttered on the cross. These he bore with meek, yet majestic patience. But when the light of God’s countenance is withdrawn from him, that light which had ever filled his righteous soul with holy joy, he cries out in anguish of spirit, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” This, this was the sting of death. He could have endured insults, and reproaches, and false accusations, and all the tortures of an excruciating death in silence. Even the perfidy of Judas, and the inconstancy of all his disciples, dear as they had ever been to him, could not for one moment disturb his inward

* Luke xxiii. 34.

serenity and peace. This was a fortress beyond the power of treachery to betray, of cowardice to surrender, or of malice to assault. But when the terrors of divine wrath arrayed themselves against it, it yielded and gave way. The calm composure of his righteous soul, unmoved by the rage of wicked men, forsakes our divine Redeemer, when overwhelmed by the storms of his Father's wrath. The gathering of this awful tempest he had long discerned; and when, from the garden of Gethsemane, he beheld it ready to burst on his devoted head, his "soul became exceeding sorrowful," and he "sweat, as it were, great drops of blood." And when, upon the cross, the thick cloud burst over him, and the tempest, now lashed to fury, spent upon him all the vials of divine wrath, he could endure no longer; nature sunk within him, and he "yielded up the spirit." O who can tell, amidst this tremendous scene, which most to admire; the inflexible justice which stayed not the stroke of vengeance, as it descended to smite the holy, beloved, only begotten Son, when he became the voluntary substitute of sinners? or, the love of the Father, who withheld not his Son, but freely gave him up to die for his enemies? or, the grace and compassion of the Redeemer himself, who, when he saw the sword of divine justice descending, shrunk not from the stroke? Well, blessed Jesus, may the spirits of the just, through thee made

perfect, ever celebrate thy wondrous grace in heavenly melodies, and with unceasing songs! Well may they sing, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."* May thy saints on earth never forget thee. May the mystery of thy holy passion ever fill and melt their hearts. To all but thee, and thy service, may they become dead. Insensible to any other charms but those of thy grace and compassion, and ravished with thine adorable loveliness and beauty, may life itself lose all its attractions: though willing to live that they may serve and honour thee, may they desire rather to depart, that they may see thy face, and be with thee for ever.

But the whole of this astonishing mystery we have not as yet disclosed. The Son of God has, as we have seen, yielded up the ghost. "He is cut off out of the land of the living." "His soul is made an offering for sin." But is he for ever to remain under the power of death? Having shed his precious blood to ransom his people, will his love never taste the bliss of beholding the blessed consequences of his vicarious sufferings, the astonishing triumphs of his grace? Yes; "he shall *see* of the travail of his soul, and shall be *satisfied*."† The tomb is not for ever to detain him its captive.

* Rev. i. 5, 6.

† Isaiah liii. 11.

He shall rise again. He is risen, he has ascended, he has already sat down at the right hand of God. Has divine justice then relented? Having received the price of pardon, has it so quickly returned it back to the great Ransomer? No; the mighty Redeemer rises not again to the possession of the same life he gave a ransom for many. The life he yielded up upon the cross was frail, feeble, and mortal. The life to which he was quickened by his own almighty energy is spiritual and divine. It was the life of man, a life common to him with those he died to redeem, that expired on the tree: but the life he now enjoys, is the life of God. Of justice he takes back no part of the penalty he had paid. It is to the power of his eternal godhead alone, that he owes his resurrection from the dead. For he is "the Prince of life."* In him is "the fountain of life." By dying, the godhead, ineffably united to the manhood, did not expire: and it was by the energy of that godhead, that he arose, and that he now lives. Nor is it possible to imagine a greater contrast than that which the humanity of Christ presents, when comparing its former state of humiliation, with its present state of exaltation and glory. The body of the blessed Jesus, once wearied with toil, oppressed with hunger and thirst, subject to every sinless infirmity common to our frail nature, requiring sustenance, and shelter, and

* Acts iii, 15.

repose, and above all, liable to the stroke of death, now hungers no more, neither thirsts any more; and being transformed and glorified, is removed beyond the reach of evil, of suffering, or of death. "He was crucified through weakness, he liveth by the power of God." He can therefore die no more. "*Death hath no more dominion over him; for, in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*"*

And by this his resurrection from the dead, divine justice is relieved from the odium, which the utter and eternal extinction of the victim of its wrath would have necessarily incurred. Instead of perishing for ever, as any created being must have done, had he paid with his own life the penalty of disobedience, the great Redeemer is himself "the first fruits from the dead."† For when he paid the life of man as the penalty demanded by inexorable justice, he ceased not to retain, as the essential Word of God, the fountain of life within himself. This was no part of the penalty incurred. Having therefore laid down his life, he had performed the full satisfaction which the law required, and had a right to exert his divine energy in quickening to life his lifeless humanity, and making it the visible abode of his invisible godhead. But to this subject I shall have occasion to advert again, and shall therefore at present only request the reader to observe,

* Rom. vi. 9, 10.

† 1 Cor. xv. 20.

how, by this glorious expedient of the incarnation of the Eternal Word, every difficulty in the way of our salvation is entirely removed. The penalty of sin is paid, divine justice is relieved from the odium of punishing with eternal death the victim of its wrath, while the substitute of sinners is himself amply rewarded for all his bitter sufferings.

Now redemption from the curse, or the gracious remission of sins, follows as a necessary consequence of the death of Christ. For the penalty of disobedience having been fully paid by him, the law can do no otherwise than acquit from the charge of guilt those for whom he died. It cannot exact that penalty twice; first of the sponsor, and then of the sinner himself: since the very condition on which Christ engaged to pay it was, that the sinner himself should go free. It was for no sins of his own that he died upon the cross, but for the sins of his people. Justice itself, therefore, must discharge those for whom that penalty was paid: not indeed as a debt due to them; no, *they* merit no discharge; but as a debt due to the great surety, who by his death purchased the right of releasing them from condemnation.

Hence it is that redemption from the curse of the law, considered in the twofold reference which it bears, one to the sinner, the other to the surety, is spoken of under two very different characters. In relation to the sinner himself, who deserves to

die, and to whom therefore it is an act of the purest grace, it is styled *the forgiveness of sins*; in relation to the surety, who, by having paid the penalty of their disobedience, is entitled to claim their discharge, it is called *justification*. Sometimes the sacred writers speak in such terms as these; “We have *redemption* through his blood, *the forgiveness of sins*;* intimating the absolute sovereignty of that grace which freely pardons our offences; while, on other occasions, they speak of the same act of forgiveness as an act of justification, and of believers as “being *justified* by his blood;”† the claims of the law upon such as had violated it, and become liable to the penalty of transgression, having been fully satisfied by the death of Christ, they are themselves, on principles of strict justice, discharged from their liability.

But here two very important questions arise. First; *To whom do the benefits of Christ's death extend?* and secondly, *To what offences does the sentence of justification relate?* In other words, Are all equally entitled to justification by the blood of Christ? and, Does justification include in it an exemption from the consequences of all sins, future as well as past?

To the first of these inquiries the reply is easy. The scriptures unequivocally declare, that the benefits of Christ's death are restricted to

* Eph. i. 7.

† Rom. v. 9.

those who believe in his name: to those, who, convinced of their guilt, embrace with joy the glad tidings of redemption through his blood. The self-righteous are wholly excluded from all interest in the blessings purchased by Christ for his people. The parables of the Pharisee and Publican, of the Lost Sheep, of the Prodigal Son, and others of a similar kind, beautifully illustrate the character of the gospel *as glad tidings to perishing sinners*. It addresses not the righteous. With them it has no concern. "I came not," said Christ, "to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* And none but sinners, who know and feel their guilt and helplessness, have any encouragement to come to him. The "weary and the heavy laden," the "poor in spirit," the publican and the sinner, are graciously invited. All others are excluded. "He scattereth the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He putteth down the mighty from their seats. The rich he sendeth empty away. While they who are of low degree are exalted; and they who are hungry are filled with good things."†

And this follows from the very nature of the covenant of grace. For if the reward of righteousness were in any degree by works, it would so far cease to be of grace. If those who were justified, were justified in any degree on account of personal worthiness, then it would not be true,

* Matt. ix. 13.

† See Luke i. 53.

that the gospel is a revelation of the righteousness of God without the law. Were any respect paid to their obedience, men would in reality be justified not as *ungodly*, but as holy persons; not by faith only, but by works also; not freely by grace, but as the merited reward of obedience. But St. Paul affirms, that God “justifieth the *ungodly* ;”^{*} that by “deeds of law no flesh can be justified in his sight ;”[†] that justification is “of faith, that it might be by grace ;”[‡] and that this grace is most *free*[§] in its exercise.

Does then this free exercise of grace afford encouragement to sin? On the contrary, being procured by the blood of Christ shed for its remission, its evil nature and awful consequences are more strikingly displayed, than could possibly be done on any scheme which should admit the offender to terms of reconciliation on the basis of his own imperfect obedience. Nothing could be more fatal to the honour of the divine law, than to suppose it possible, that a violation of it might be overlooked in consideration of the otherwise merit of the offender. The idea is absurd. To a holy mind, which discerns the perfect rectitude of the law of God, it is more than absurd, it is impious. It proceeds on the shocking principle, that rigorously to enforce the requisitions of the law would be an act of injustice to the creature who has failed in his obedience. Need I expose

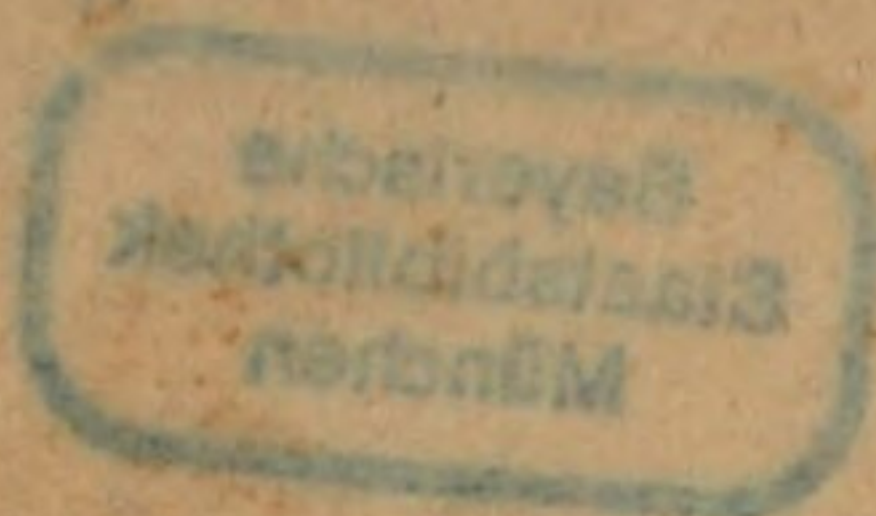
^{*} Rom. iv. 5. [†] Ibid. iii. 20. [‡] Ibid. iv. 16. [§] Ibid. iii. 24.



the impiety of such a sentiment as this? Need I remind the reader how utterly at variance it is with the principles on which the just and righteous Governor of the world proceeded, when, for the one offence of our great progenitor, he pronounced sentence of condemnation on him and all his posterity? Need I repeat what I formerly observed in relation to the conduct of Jehovah towards his ancient people, after they had once broken the covenant of Mount Sinai? These facts are so utterly irreconcilable with the doctrine of human merit, that it is impossible, one should imagine, with these striking proofs to the contrary, to maintain the efficacy of works of righteousness to justify men before God. Nay, even the death of Christ, which lays the foundation for the exercise of divine mercy, cannot be accounted for on the supposition, that justification might be obtained by works of our own. "For if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain."*

The principle on which justification by the blood of Christ proceeds, is the equity of the divine law, the perfect rectitude of all its requirements, and consequently, the infinite turpitude and demerit of sin. Whereas, on the other hand, the principle on which they proceed, who expect to be justified by an imperfect obedience, is the unjust severity of the divine law, which

* Gal. ii. 21.



denounces death as the punishment of one single act of disobedience. Which of these two doctrines is most licentious in its tendency, I leave to the reader to determine.

The very sovereignty of divine grace, which, in justifying the ungodly, entirely excludes all consideration of personal worthiness in the objects of its merciful regard, is, in truth, that which secures the exercise of it from being productive of any consequences fatal to the divine government. To justify sinners *as such*, is the only possible way of preserving unsullied the honour of God's holy law. Were offenders to be received into favour out of respect to their imperfect obedience, the very act of grace exerted in their behalf would form a most dangerous precedent indeed. It would serve as a practical proof of God's indifference to the conduct of his creatures, and be taken as an admission, that far less than sinless obedience would found a claim to acquittal at his righteous bar. But not so his justifying the *ungodly*. Here the adequacy of an imperfect obedience to justify in his sight is expressly denied. Here the supposed rigour of the law is utterly disaffirmed. Forgiveness is indeed extended; but it is not because God has ceased to be the enemy of sin. The guilty are pardoned; but it is not because God repents of the undue severity of his law. The penalty *itself* is not remitted; that is exacted and paid to the last mite.

To the transgressor indeed it is remitted; but not to his gracious Surety. When he offered himself in the sinner's room, he could obtain no release. "O my Father," said he, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."* No; his prayer could not be granted. This was a request, which even God's only begotten Son could not obtain. And will God grant to the insolent suit of enemies, what he denied to the prayer of his beloved Son? It is madness to expect it. And yet with this madness they are chargeable, who think so lightly of their sins as to imagine they can stand the scrutiny of the omniscient eye of God when he shall come to judgment. So thought not holy David. He deprecates the very thought of being judged by the strict claims of God's holy law, well knowing, that were he to be thus judged, he must be condemned. He therefore prays, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified."† And all who understand the true nature of the law of God will gladly adopt the Psalmist's prayer. And if they comprehend, as he did, that gracious plan which God has devised for justifying the ungodly, they will exclaim with him; "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin."‡

The whole scheme of redemption demonstrates,

* Matt. xxvi. 39.

† Psalm cxliii. 2.

‡ Ibid. xxxii. 1, 2.

equally with the covenant of works, the rigour with which the law exacts the penalty of disobedience, when once it has been incurred; and, consequently, the absolute necessity of sinless obedience to entitle any one to an acquittal at its righteous bar; since even the Son of God himself could not procure for his people a remission of the penalty, without himself paying that penalty to the last mite. We cannot commit a greater, or more fatal mistake, than to suppose, that, under the gospel dispensation, mercy is exercised at the expence of justice; that God recedes from his original demand of an absolutely perfect obedience, and repents himself of the severity of his awful threatenings; that in sending his Son to redeem us, he tacitly allows, either that his law was too holy, or its penalty too severe. On the contrary, by exacting the penalty of his Son, when he became the sinner's surety, he expresses his infinite and immutable delight in his righteous law, and his fixed determination never to recede from the smallest iota of its demands. The astonishing wisdom of the plan of redemption consists in its reconciling the exercise of grace and mercy with the most rigid claims of inflexible justice. It is this which fills heaven with wonder; nor will eternal ages lessen the amazement, with which the angelic host, and the blessed company of the redeemed, will ever contemplate this profound, this adorable mystery.

Let the sinner then, whom the glad tidings of pardon through the blood of Christ fills with holy joy, never forget that God is still the friend of truth and righteousness; and that he forgives sin not because his hatred of it has diminished. Let him be careful how he entertains light thoughts of the evil of sin. Of one thing he may rest assured, that if his views of salvation by Christ have lessened his abhorrence of sin, he is labouring under a most awful delusion.

But another question still remains to be answered, viz. *To what offences does justification extend?* Does it equally exempt the believer from the consequences of *all future*, as well as of *all past* sins? In other words, Is justification *prospective*, as well as *retrospective*?

To this question some have replied in the affirmative, maintaining, that when believers are justified by faith in Christ, they are relieved from the consequences of all sins, future as well as past. This doctrine has been advocated by some to whose writings the Church stands deeply indebted. But the sanction of their names ought not to blind us to the fatal consequences which inevitably result from so dangerous a doctrine. In opposition to their authority I hesitate not to affirm, that such a doctrine has no support whatever from the infallible oracles of truth; and that it rests wholly on a misconception; that it arises in short from confounding two things altogether unlike; viz. that

exercise of forgiving mercy which constitutes an essential ingredient in the sentence of justification; and those daily exercises of forgiveness which are posterior to justification, and which the remaining infirmities and imperfections even of the best of men constantly require. It is from confounding these two things, than which, as we shall presently see, we cannot imagine to ourselves a more striking contrast, that the fatal doctrine of prospective justification has arisen.

That this doctrine has no foundation in the word of God; in other words, that justification is *retrospective* only, the following passage most decisively proves; “For this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, *for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament*, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”* Observe the striking peculiarity of the Apostle’s language. The transgressions, which the death of Christ is here said to *redeem*, are described as “the transgressions *that were under the first testament*.” Now this can only mean those transgressions which are committed by believers prior to their faith in Christ, when they were under the first testament: consequently the redemption here spoken of cannot extend to sins committed by them subsequently to their faith in Christ, by which they are brought from under the

* Heb. ix. 15.

covenant of works, and are placed under a covenant of grace. Such offences cannot with any truth or propriety be denominated “transgressions that are under the first testament.” On the contrary they are, to adopt the Apostle’s phraseology, “transgressions that are under the second testament.” These latter, though they need *forgiveness*, and, if not forgiven, would finally draw down upon the offender the wrath of Almighty God; yet, strictly speaking, need not *redemption*; since the law of which they are violations does not threaten every transgression with *death*.

Again, the same Apostle, speaking of “the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe,” observes, that God hath set forth his Son “to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for *the remission of sins that are past*, through the forbearance of God.”* Here again is a similar restriction of justification to those sins which are committed anterior to the exercise of that faith in the blood of Christ by which we are justified. For, according to the limitation here drawn, the sins then remitted are “*sins that are past* ;” that is, as I understand the words, sins committed prior to justification. And, in like manner, the Apostle Peter, alluding to one who is barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ, declares, that “he is blind, and cannot

* Rom. iii. 25.

see afar off, and hath forgotten that *he was purged from his old sins.*"* The signification of the epithet "*old*," here applied to designate those sins from which he had been purged, cannot be mistaken. It admits of but one interpretation, and confirms very strongly the reality of the distinction above laid down.

Indeed, were the scriptures even silent on this head, which we find they are not, it would be preposterous to extend justification to acts committed posterior to it: not to observe that the necessity of justification arises wholly from the peculiar nature of a dispensation of law, which knows nothing of grace or favour, and can only proceed on principles of strict and impartial justice. If sins committed under it are forgiven, it can only be in a way of *justification*; that is, in consideration of the penalty having been paid by another. The penalty itself, as we have formerly shewn, must be paid; it cannot be remitted. And when it has once been actually paid, the claims of justice are satisfied; and being satisfied, cannot be reinforced. The law, therefore, has no alternative left to its choice, but to pronounce a sentence of acquittal. In doing this, however, it remits no part of the penalty. On the contrary, it acquits the transgressor in consideration of that penalty having been already paid. And hence remission of sins is styled *justification*—a term fitly chosen

* 2 Pet. i. 9.

to illustrate that principle of strict justice on which God, as the righteous Judge, proceeds, when he justifies the ungodly. For though, in relation to the personal merits of the transgressor himself, the exercise of forgiveness is most free and undeserved, and what it would be the height of presumptuous impiety in him to claim; yet, in relation to the sinner's surety, who fully paid the penalty of his transgression, it is no more than justice demands.

But the covenant of grace, making express provision for the exercise of forgiveness, and not denouncing, after the example of the law, a *curse* on every offence committed against its righteous demands, does not require the offender to be *justified* from the guilt contracted by every offence, previous to his being restored to the divine favour: otherwise one of these two consequences would follow, either justification would have to be daily and hourly repeated—for we are daily and hourly offending; or else justification must be considered as taking place once for all, and as having a *prospective* reference, cleansing us from the guilt of future as well as of past sins;—the consequences of which would, as we shall presently see, be most fatal indeed.

Now, according to the first supposition, the state of justification could not be preserved a single day, nay, a single hour. Every action, every word, every thought, being more or less

mixed with sin, and therefore a violation of the rule of perfect righteousness, would occasion a forfeiture of the blessing, which would have to be renewed as often as it was forfeited, and would again be forfeited as soon as it was renewed. How utterly inconsistent such a doctrine is with that peace with God which it is the happy privilege of every true believer to enjoy, I need not observe.

To avoid this dilemma then, shall we on the other hand affirm, that by faith in Christ the believer is for ever justified from the guilt of all future, as well as of all past sins? This hypothesis is attended with consequences more fatal even than the former. Under the pretence of being necessary to afford peace of conscience, a pretence which is wholly without foundation, it in fact operates as a grant of *indulgence*. Admitting for a moment that justification really does absolve from the guilt of future as well as of past sins, is it not obvious how many of the most powerful motives to watchfulness, prayer, self-denial, godly jealousy over ourselves, and active and unwearied labours in the service of Christ, are destroyed? It is impossible to imagine a doctrine which could render men more fearless of committing iniquity; for being already relieved from all the consequences of future transgressions, of whatever enormity they might be, they could have no reasonable cause of apprehension left. Whatever their future conduct might be, having

been already justified, their final salvation would be sure.

How like, in its very worst features, this doctrine is to that dangerous delusion of the Church of Rome, which formerly paved the way for the Reformation—the *doctrine of indulgences*—I need not surely observe. The resemblance is too obvious not to have already struck the mind of every one of my readers. Or if any should doubt the resemblance, they have only to read the form of absolution which I have transcribed in the margin, and which was formerly used by Tetzel, that notorious retailer of Romish indulgences, to be thoroughly convinced of it.* It was the absolution of *all sins, transgressions, and*

* The following words contain the form of absolution used by Tetzel. “May our Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon thee, and absolve thee by the merits of his most holy passion. And I, by his authority, that of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and of the most holy Pope, granted and committed to me, in these parts, do absolve thee, first from all ecclesiastical censures, in whatever manner they have been incurred, and then from *all thy sins, transgressions, and excesses, how enormous soever they may be*, even from such as are reserved for the cognizance of the holy see; and as far as the keys of the holy church extend, I remit to you all punishment which you deserve in purgatory on their account; and I restore you to the holy sacraments of the church, to the unity of the faithful, and to that innocence and purity which you possessed at baptism, *so that when you die, the gates of punishment shall be shut, and the gates of the paradise of delight shall be opened: and if you shall not die at present, this grace shall remain in full force when you are at the point of death.* In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Robertson’s Hist. Charles Vth. Book ii.—I request the reader particularly to remark the words printed in italics.

excesses, how enormous soever they might be, without any limitation to past offences, and the efficacy of that absolution extending itself even till death, which gave indulgences so many fatal attractions, and caused them to be purchased by the depraved and abandoned of that licentious age with such eager avidity. And what is it, I may ask, which, in the present day, renders Antinomian heresy so alluring to the licentious multitude, but its professing to absolve them from the guilt of all sins past, present, and to come? What, but the confidence with which it pretends to justify the sinner so entirely from his sins, that even if he should not die at present, the grace which he now receives shall remain in full force when he is at the point of death?

Yes; Antinomianism is this accursed trade revived, but under a more specious, and therefore a more dangerous form. We have many a Tetzels in the present day, who with a pride, an effrontery, and a covetousness equal to his, but with a degree of cunning far greater than ever he could boast of, promulgate indulgences, and with great success. In short, it is an impious compact between covetousness in the teacher, and licentiousness in his disciples.

I would not be thought, however, to insinuate, that all who may now maintain, or who have formerly maintained, the doctrine of prospective justification, are chargeable with this awful crime.

Far from it. But after making this admission, which truth requires I should make, I will be bold to maintain, that the error itself is not the less pernicious, because it has the sanction of illustrious names. On the contrary, it only proves the insidiousness of the delusion, when it can have imposed on the understandings of men distinguished for their rectitude of intention and purity of life. With them, indeed, it was nothing more than a fallacy of the judgment: it went no further. Their hearts remained uncontaminated by its influence. But not so with others. With them it is a heresy of the heart. They embrace it, not from ignorance of its pernicious influence; of this they are perfectly aware. On the contrary, their knowledge of its real tendency is the very ground of their choice. And with them it is matter of exultation, that they can point to men of acknowledged probity and worth, who have espoused the sentiment: for while they derive from it all the advantage which the utmost depravity of their hearts could desire, they are, by such an appeal, enabled to escape the odium which the licentious tendency of their doctrine would otherwise incur.

The delusion I am now endeavouring to expose is in reality more dangerous, because more subtle, and less easily detected, than that which roused the mighty mind of Luther to so just, and for mankind, so happy an indignation. Would

that some Luther might now arise, to expose *this* delusion in all its native malignity. Would that some holy man, endued with equal sagacity to pierce the vail by which it contrives to hide its deformity, and with a pencil equally bold to sketch the real character and lineaments of this most deadly error, might arise and present it to the world without any disguise, any covering to conceal its pollution and its shame. The time is come to blow the trumpet of alarm, that the churches of God may hear and tremble. An enemy is at hand, lurking in secret ambush near the very walls of Zion—near them did I say? I recall that word, and I now say, within them: an enemy the more dangerous, because he is disguised; an enemy deep in his malignity, fixed in his resolves, and steady to his purpose.

The doctrine of prospective justification is founded on the pretext of its being necessary to the stability of the believer's peace of conscience. But this is altogether a mistake. Justification need not extend to future offences, in order to relieve us from the condemnation due to sin. The law of the covenant of grace differs essentially from the law of the covenant of works. By the very condition of the latter, sinless obedience was required: the curse was denounced against one single transgression. If therefore it was once violated, the curse in its fullest extent must be rigorously inflicted. By the very nature of a

covenant of works it could not be remitted. If the sinner were ever pardoned, it must be in a way of justification; that is, it must be in consideration of the penalty of sin having been fully paid by another. But by faith in Christ, believers are brought into a new covenant with God, constructed, not after the pattern of the legal dispensation, on principles of strict justice, but on a principle of grace, that is, of favour; a principle which expressly provides for the forgiveness of sin; and which, while it threatens the wilful transgressor of its law with God's severest displeasure, certainly does not denounce *death* as the penalty of *every* offence. While it affirms, that God will "by no means clear the guilty;" and that "he will repay them that hate him to their face;" it proclaims the name of Jehovah, "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."* Now, whatever covenant provides for the forgiveness of sins committed under it, supersedes the necessity of *justification* in relation to those sins. For, as was observed before, the sole reason why justification was requisite at all, even in relation to the covenant of works, was the inexorable and unrelenting character of a dispensation of law. If such a dispensation could have permitted the extension

* Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7.

of mercy to the guilty, no provision need have been made to *justify* them before God. Consequently there is no pretence whatever for extending justification to future as well as to past sins. To peace of conscience it is not necessary that justification be considered as prospective. If the covenant of grace resembled the covenant of works, in denouncing death for every offence, it would certainly be necessary. But this is not the case. It provides for the pardon of sin. And, having made this provision, it is under no necessity of extending justification beyond the guilt of past transgressions. Those which are future may be forgiven by an application to the throne of grace; and, by reserving to himself the prerogative of forgiveness, God has best consulted the sanctification of his people.

For if we admit, what is really the truth, that justification is only retrospective; that it only purges the conscience from the guilt already contracted under a dispensation which itself allowed of no remission of sins; the necessity of future obedience to the revealed will of God is in no degree superseded by it: since, if the word of God even permitted us to suppose, that any who are truly justified from the guilt of past sins, could afterwards live in wilful disobedience to the will of God, and die impenitent, the consequences of such future transgressions would still follow them; and, notwithstanding their pre-

vious state of justification, they would inevitably perish for ever. It is not his being saved from the consequences of past offences, that is the believer's security for eternal life. No such thing. That security arises entirely from another source, which we shall soon have occasion fully to explain: and were it possible, which revelation forbids us to suppose, to separate the various benefits of redemption, so that he who was really justified in the sight of God from the guilt of his past sins while under a covenant of law, could remain under the reigning power of corruption; then might a man unquestionably in this sense be justified, and yet finally perish.

It is on this principle that all the warnings, admonitions, exhortations, and threatenings of the New Testament are constructed. Hence they derive all their force. For whatever answer justification affords to the claims of the law of the first covenant, it affords none whatever to those of the law of the second covenant. And though under this more gracious dispensation, *perfect* and *sinless* obedience is not made the condition of salvation—for then none could be saved—yet a sincere and faithful, a constant and enduring love to Christ, manifesting itself in a patient continuance in well-doing, is an indispensable condition. So that, were it even to be admitted, that one who had lived and died in a state of impenitence, had, at some former period of his

life, been really justified by faith in the blood of Christ; still, on the conditions of the covenant of grace, which restricts the promise of life to the obedient, he could not be finally saved. Not that we can seriously allow, that the finally impenitent ever were in a state of previous justification: for, as I shall shew hereafter, justification includes in it, besides the remission of past sins, *the gracious award of spiritual life*, and, wherever it really takes place, is invariably accompanied with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost: from which it follows, that no man who remains under the reigning power of sin ever was justified; for, had he been justified, the power of sin would have been vanquished and subdued by the mighty energy of that spirit of grace, which they who are justified receive by faith.

It is entirely on this principle, that St. Paul constructs that conclusive argument against licentiousness, which immediately follows his statement of the doctrine of justification by faith. This argument commences with the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, and extends through several of the following chapters. To the inference in favour of licentiousness which he supposes to be drawn from his doctrine, and which he puts in the form of a question, "What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" he replies by proposing another question, "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any

longer therein?"* and then he follows up this question with an argument founded on the principle above adverted to, but to be more fully explained in the following chapters, that justification includes in it the award of spiritual life, and is uniformly and invariably accompanied with the gift of the Holy Spirit. But the force of this argument will be better understood in a subsequent stage of our inquiry. At present, I can do no more than request the reader to bear this argument in his recollection; and to remember what was formerly observed, that remission of sins constitutes but one branch, and that not the most important, perhaps, of justification by faith in Christ. To the consideration of the remaining branch of it, I shall immediately proceed.

* Romans vi. 1, 2.

CHAP. VI.

ON THE SECOND PECULIARITY OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE, VIZ. THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE AND HOLINESS.

THE observations already made illustrate only that part of the scheme of divine mercy revealed to us in the Gospel, which the inflexible justice of God on the one hand, and the apostacy of our race on the other, rendered necessary to prepare the way for the establishment of Messiah's kingdom. Before the foundations of this kingdom could be laid, there were great, and, to all but infinite wisdom, insurmountable difficulties to be overcome. The rigid claims of God's violated law were to be fully satisfied. The penalty of disobedience was to be paid; and this penalty was death. But, blessed be God, these to us insuperable difficulties are now completely removed by the incarnation, sufferings and death of his only begotten Son.

We should awfully deceive ourselves, however, did we suppose, that, by the death of Christ, the great work of our salvation was fully completed; and that nothing then remained, but for the objects

of his mercy and grace to take immediate possession of their eternal inheritance.

Redemption by the blood of Christ is only the preparatory step in the work of our salvation, and bears a similar relation to the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, which, formerly, the redemption of the children of Israel did to the kingdom of Jehovah, in the establishment of which the gracious purposes of God respecting them received their full accomplishment. To understand the economy of our salvation, we must look beyond the death of Christ to the great purpose which his death was intended to accomplish. And this purpose is so clearly defined and expressed in the writings of the New Testament, that nothing but a determination not to perceive it, can account for its being overlooked. The very name of the illustrious Apostle of the christian profession, *Jesus*, cannot be repeated, without recalling to our minds its mysterious import. “*He shall save his people from their sins,*”* is the angelic interpretation of that adorable name. And with this agrees the whole tenor of divine revelation. Thus St. Paul testifies, “To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, *that he might be Lord* both of the dead and living:”† And again; “He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”‡ But it would be endless to

* Matt. i. 21.

† Rom. xiv. 9.

‡ Titus ii. 14.

adduce every testimony of the same import with which the New Testament abounds. These are enough to shew, that the death of Christ has its full consummation only in the establishment of his mediatorial kingdom. And it is in the kingdom of the once dead, but now risen and exalted Redeemer, that grace reigns and triumphs. Hither we must come, would we see its majesty, and its might. But for the conquests we here behold achieved by the Prince Messiah, his incarnation, and sufferings, and death were all in vain. But for the blessings he here distributes among the happy subjects of his reign, he might, as to any benefits resulting from them to the objects of his compassion, have spared himself the agonies of a cross, and the dishonours of a tomb. But for these, he might have remained for ever in the bosom of the Father; nor need he to have laid aside the splendours of deity, to array himself in the humble attire of a servant, and, clothed in flesh, to exchange the honours of celestial worship and angelic service, for the scoffs and derision of the low and degraded children of men.

It is really dishonourable to the Saviour of sinners to imagine, that the work of our salvation was finished on the cross. It is dishonourable to divine grace to suppose, that it reigns only in the forgiveness of our sins. And yet, it is under pretence of doing honour to divine grace, and of

exalting the Saviour in the eyes of men, that forgiveness of sins has been represented, as if it constituted the whole of our salvation. It is under this specious profession, that this Antinomian heresy has made such successful inroads into the church of God. A direct attack on the person and work of Christ would not be endured. Socinianism proves this. Its hostility to the claims of the blessed Jesus on the love and adoration of his redeemed people is so plainly marked upon its forehead, that the most simple and unwary can scarcely be deceived by it. But Antinomianism, though equally intent on dishonouring Christ, advances to the attack under friendly banners. It raises the cross of Christ, that it may the more effectually prostrate his throne. And it has been by the aid of this hollow artifice, that it has succeeded in swelling its ranks from among those who desire nothing more ardently than to advance the honour of their Lord.

It is become necessary, therefore, would we succeed in exposing this grand delusion of the enemy of souls, that we should convince mankind of the hollowness of its loud professions of regard for the honour of divine grace; that we should prove, beyond the possibility of contradiction, that those tenets, which undermine the foundations of christian obedience, are hostile to the glory of Christ, and absolutely irreconcilable with that exalted name he bears, "*Jehovah our*

righteousness."* Yes, we must tear the mask from this most daring of all impostures, and exhibit it to the world in its own native deformity.

Should any of my readers have incautiously lent an ear to its lying professions, O let me intreat their patient attention, while I endeavour to prove to them, how sadly they have been deluded. I pledge myself to detect the infamous imposture of which they have been the unconscious dupes; and to convince all but those who resolve not to be undeceived, that the grace of God, and the honour and glory of Christ, are deeply concerned in the detection of it. Yes, ye deluded friends of the adorable Redeemer, ye little know, how ye are abetting the enemies of your beloved Lord. You call him *Lord*, and yet you deny his title to rule over you. You invest him with robes of royalty, and put into his hands the sceptre of dominion; and then, as if by way of derision, you salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews." Beware lest you arouse him to wrath by proffering him such empty homage. The time is long since past, when it was permitted thus to mock him with impunity. The period of his humiliation is no more. There was a time, when the Son of Man patiently submitted to the cruel taunts of men; when he meekly endured their indignities; when he wore on his sacred temples a crown of thorns, and held in his hand a reed for a sceptre.

* Jer. xxiii. 6.

But that period is gone by; and none may now mock him with impunity. Beware how you provoke him to wrath. "The Lamb of God" is now become "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." He now holdeth in his hand another sceptre, and on his head he wears a far different crown. Before him insulting enemies no longer bow the knee, but cherubim and seraphim fall prostrate at his feet in humble adoration. His visage is no longer marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. "But in righteousness doth he judge and make war. His eyes are as a flame of fire: on his head are many crowns: out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword with which he smites the nations; he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And on his vesture, and on his thigh, he hath a name written, '*King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*'"* Bring then an offering, and come into his courts; "serve him with fear, and rejoice before him with trembling." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way." Above all, remember his solemn words, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."† And, if you can, reply to his cutting inquiry; "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"‡

* Rev. xix. 11—16.

† Matt. vii. 21.

‡ Luke vi. 46.

To some, I doubt not, it appears matter of astonishment, that the necessity of obeying the will of Christ in order to salvation should ever have been disputed ; that, in spite of so many obstacles, the enemy of souls should ever have been able to pervert the grace of God to licentiousness. And doubtless this perversion of the grace of God is Satan's master-piece of policy. But then it should be considered, that it is nothing more than a particular application of his grand principle of seduction ; than following up the same system of delusion, by which he wrought man's ruin at the first. In every age of the world it has been the great artifice of Satan to cast an odium on the service of God ; to persuade men, that a life of obedience, and a life of true felicity, are incompatible. It has been his aim to associate in their minds the idea of bondage with that of subjection to divine authority : and when he has succeeded in this, he has accomplished his malignant purpose.

Now, once admit the axiom, that obedience to God and true happiness are incompatible, and Antinomian principles follow from it as so many necessary consequences. For, if freedom from all restraint be really the highest felicity of which our nature is capable ; then, the gospel, to be a perfect manifestation of divine grace, ought to confer upon us this inestimable advantage. But it is the acknowledged character of the gospel

to reveal the grace of God: consequently, on the supposition that freedom from restraint is the greatest of all blessings, the gospel must release us from the yoke of subjection to divine authority. I put it to the reader, whether this be not the true key to the Antinomian scheme. And if it be, then he can be at no loss to reply to another question, namely, who is the contriver of this scheme? It evidently originates with the father of lies, the enemy of God and man; that wicked spirit, who, when his aim has been to seduce the servants of God from their allegiance to him, has never scrupled to cast insidious reflections on God's moral government, and openly to pronounce his service bondage.

So far, however, is the gospel from giving countenance to this impious sentiment, that nothing could be imagined more calculated to expose its falsehood. The very *denomination* given to the glad tidings of our salvation,—“the glad tidings *of the reign of God*,”—proves that, in whatever else salvation may consist, certainly release from the yoke of divine authority forms no part of it. On the contrary it exhibits, as its grand distinguishing feature, the re-establishment of God's moral empire over the hearts of the children of men. It is nothing else than *glad tidings concerning God's kingdom*. Yes, it is glad tidings of great joy that God has set up his everlasting kingdom among men. No images of felicity, the

most cheering and delightful to the best feelings of our hearts, can adequately express the pure and perfect bliss which it reveals. The joy of the husbandman, when he gathers in the harvest, the reward of his long-continued labours; of the victor, when, at the close of an arduous combat, he divides the spoil; of the captive, released from his dark and dismal captivity; of the debtor, for ever acquitted a debt which he could never hope to discharge; of the slave, restored to the rights of freedom and of humanity; all these are utterly inadequate to describe the joy, which the glad tidings of the kingdom of God convey to the heart. And yet, if the sentiment I am opposing be true, they are so far from deserving the denomination of "glad tidings of great joy," given to them by way of pre-eminence, that they are mournful, afflictive, disastrous tidings.

That the proclamation of Messiah's happy reign is that which the writers of the New Testament emphatically style "the gospel," or, as the term would be more properly rendered, "the glad tidings," I hope I have fully satisfied the reader in the introductory chapter of this work. I will not therefore weary his patience with repeating what I there advanced; but shall hasten to shew, that the kingdom of God, introduced and established by the coming of the Messiah, is the *reign of grace*; that it affords the most astonishing manifestations of God's love to man; and therefore,

that the news of it, proclaimed by the gospel heralds, is, what they significantly style it, "glad tidings of great joy."

But in order to this, I must recall to the recollection of the reader, what was formerly advanced in relation to the Mosaic economy; as it illustrates, in the most striking manner, the radical distinction between the two dispensations of law and grace. The Mosaic economy was shewn to consist of two very distinct covenants; one a covenant of law, in the strict sense of that term; the other a covenant of grace, but only in types and shadows. These two covenants are, I am aware, very generally confounded, and considered as only different parts of one and the same covenant. But that Moses himself did not consider them as one, it is very easy to shew. Speaking of the covenant of Mount Sinai, he says, "*The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount, out of the midst of the fire.*"* And afterwards, speaking of the covenant of grace originally made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and renewed with their posterity, he says, "*These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant*

* Deut. v. 2, 4.

which he made with them in Horeb."* Now it was this latter covenant which constituted the glory of the Jewish church: it was this covenant which formed the typical representation of the Christian economy. It was this covenant which St. Paul defines, "a figure for the time then present;"† a "shadow of good things to come."‡ But if this were its character, the gospel dispensation can no otherwise differ from it, than as the substance differs from the shadow. If we discard those peculiarities of the gospel, which correspond to the forms and images of truth contained in the law, the Mosaic economy has not only "no glory *by reason of that which excelleth,*"§ as our Apostle teaches us, but it has in reality no glory at all. According to the writers of the New Testament, it "made nothing perfect, *but the bringing in of a better hope.*"|| Now this purpose it was admirably suited to accomplish: but this it did by its strict resemblance to heavenly things.

Now two things are most evidently observable in the typical dispensation of Moses: first, a "form of knowledge and of the truth,"¶ the pattern of that rectitude of heart which God requires; and secondly, promises of pardon and

* Deut. xxix. 1. † Heb. ix. 9. ‡ Ibid. x. 1. § 2 Cor. iii. 10.

|| Heb. vii. 19. There is no ellipsis in the original, as our translators must have supposed. The word "*did,*" which they have supplied, gives a sense to the passage foreign to the writer's argument.

¶ Rom. ii. 20.

reconciliation on condition of sincere repentance and return to God. And what deserves peculiar attention is, that this "form of knowledge," and these gracious manifestations of forgiving mercy, constituted the glory of that typical dispensation. In what light the righteous statutes of God were regarded by such as lived under the legal dispensation, we have already seen; nay, we have seen, that even Jehovah himself considered them as the highest proof which he could give of his especial love to his people Israel. And surely, I need not observe, since it will hardly be denied, that it was the revelation of the character of Jehovah, as a "God, pardoning iniquity and transgression and sin," which formed another striking feature of that typical dispensation. "Who is a God like unto thee," exclaims the Prophet Micah, "that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy."*

Such, then, were the peculiar features of the type. The antitype must, therefore, strictly correspond with it in each of these particulars. If the law present us with "the *form* of knowledge and of the truth;" then must the gospel be the ministration of knowledge and of the truth itself. If the law portray that glorious perfection of the divine character, *God's delight in mercy*; then

* Micah vii. 18.

forgiveness of sins must be exercised under the gospel dispensation. But each of these correspondences is totally overlooked by such as deny the necessity of personal and vital holiness. For if, under the gospel dispensation, there be no rule of righteousness imperatively binding on the disciples of Christ, there can be no necessity for the spirit of grace to write it on their hearts: nor can the daily exercise of forgiving mercy, so beautifully typified by the daily sacrifices of the law, be practicable; since, if there be no law, there can be no transgression, and consequently nothing to forgive. What becomes then, I would ask, of the glory of divine grace? It is plain, that to lay a foundation for the manifestation of it even in the forgiveness of sins, much more in regenerating and sanctifying the hearts of men, it is indispensably necessary to admit an indissoluble connection between holiness and life.

It is as being “the *ministration of the Spirit*,”* that the gospel excels in glory the law, which was simply, “the *ministration of the letter*.” For the spirit of grace is the *truth* or substance of that of which the law was only the pattern or type. Why the spirit of grace was wanting to the legal economy, the remarks which will be presently made will explain. Had it, indeed, been able to have communicated that spirit, there would have been in truth no place found for another and better

* 2 Cor. iii. 8.

covenant. The law was not abolished, because it revealed the will of God, as some have absurdly fancied; but, among other reasons, because it comprehended no provision for giving efficiency to that revelation. The reason why the typical dispensation of law was abolished, is expressly assigned by God himself; viz. because they, to whom it was given, "*continued not in his covenant.*"* And the peculiar excellence of the new covenant above the old is also specified. And in what does it consist? Is it, that God will no longer prescribe his will as the rule of life? No such thing. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; *I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.*"† There is no difference whatever between the two dispensations of law and grace, as to the *obligation* of the will of God on those to whom it is revealed. It is *the manner in which it is revealed, which constitutes the sole distinction.*

The gift of the Holy Spirit, to enable the believer in Christ to do the will of God, is then, the first and most important characteristic of Messiah's spiritual reign. And, accordingly, the Prophet, speaking of the future kingdom of Christ, says, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."‡

There are some, however, who deny that this

* Heb. viii. 9.

† Ibid. 10.

‡ Psalm cx. 3.

constitutes the radical distinction between the kingdom of Jehovah, and the kingdom of Christ. Unacquainted with the corruption of the human heart, and with its entire alienation from the life of God, they suppose that nothing more is wanting to enable men to do the will of God, than a revelation of that will, accompanied with those weighty motives to obedience, which the character of God, his relation to man, and the doctrine of a future retribution supply. Consequently, in spite of every opposing testimony, they maintain, that the Christian religion is nothing more than a revelation of the divine will, accompanied with a glorious manifestation of the divine perfections, and enforced by the discovery of a future state of rewards and punishments. This is the sum and substance of what may be called *the religion of the world*. Nothing is plainer, however, than that it is *not* the religion of Christ. No part of divine revelation gives it any countenance. It meets with no support either from the law, or the gospel: and, what its advocates little suspect, it is as unfriendly to real holiness, as it is avowedly adverse to divine grace. For, deny that the gospel is distinguished from the law by its ministering the spirit of grace, and wherein can its superiority be made to appear? There is no alternative left, than that of representing the rule of duty under the christian dispensation as relaxed in accommodation to the weakness and infirmity of human

nature. Either the spirit of grace must be given to raise men to the level of their duty; or the standard of duty must be lowered to the level of their weakness; so that he who rejects the former of these suppositions, must necessarily embrace the latter.

But if the latter be adopted, then he must maintain one of these two hypotheses. He must either suppose that the same rule of duty which subsisted under the legal dispensation still remains in force without alteration, but that obedience to it is now exacted with less rigour: or else, he must suppose that another rule has been substituted in its room, prescribing duties of more easy observance.

Now, unfortunately for those who reject the doctrine of the gift of the Holy Spirit, they are precluded from maintaining either of these suppositions. That the Jewish law remains in full force, and unaltered, they do not so much as pretend. On the contrary, they urge it as matter of just triumph over the Jew, that the gospel has abolished the burdensome rites and ceremonies prescribed by the law of Moses. It certainly has done this; and it is a cause of thanksgiving and praise that it has done it. But is any thing gained by this admission? Is our duty to God rendered more easy of performance by its becoming less ritual? Is human infirmity at all consulted by the substitution of a spiritual in the place of a carnal

service? On the contrary, is it not infinitely easier to serve God according to "the oldness of the letter," than it is to serve him according to "the newness of the spirit?" And did not the Jewish law better consult the actual capabilities of our species, when it ordained "bodily exercises," and "carnal ordinances," than the christian law does, which says, "Ye must be born again?"* Certainly the universal experience of mankind is in favour of the affirmative.

The abolition of the Jewish ceremonial, and the substitution of a spiritual service in its room, has, in truth, produced an effect the very reverse of the one which many fondly imagine. Instead of giving greater facilities to obedience, it has thrown infinitely greater impediments in the way of it, than what arose from the complicated texture of the Jewish ritual. For ceremonial institutions, however numerous, or however burdensome, may be very strictly observed while the heart remains alienated from God; but not so God's spiritual law. Let the proudest and most self-confident pharisee but once discern its true nature, and his experience will confirm the melancholy testimony of St. Paul, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God."†

It is plain then, that whatever may be the

* John iii. 7.

† Rom. viii. 7, 8.

way in which the gospel has become intitled to be styled by way of eminence, "glad tidings of great joy," it is not, most certainly, by its having better consulted the infirmity of human nature than the law of Moses did in the greater practicability of the duties it prescribes. That it does however accommodate itself to human infirmity, is true: but then it is in a sense far different from that which I have been opposing;—one far more honourable to the law of God, far more consistent with the divine character and perfections, and, I may also add, far more beneficial to us in its results.

It is not by lowering the standard of duty to the level of our feeble capacity, that God exhibits the amazing riches of his grace. His infinite purity could never consent to such a scheme; nor is his infinite power reduced to the necessity of adopting so dishonourable an expedient. It is in raising our fallen nature to the high standard proposed to us in his gospel, that he displays the inexhaustible resources of his wisdom, power, and love.

No one who comprehends the nature of that gracious provision which God has made in his gospel for the moral recovery of our apostate race, will ever feel the slightest temptation to lower the standard of duty. Indeed it is only by elevating that standard—and this Christ and his Apostles have done by substituting the service of the heart in the stead of that bodily service

prescribed by the Jewish ritual—that the infinite value of so gracious a provision as that of a sanctifier can be made to appear.

To feel the importance of the gift of the Holy Spirit promised by Christ to all the faithful, we have only to understand the spirituality of the divine law. Let it once be perceived, that God “requires truth in the inward parts,”* and the prayer of David will be adopted as our own; “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”† Let the saying of Christ be once distinctly understood and admitted, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees;”—that is, unless it rise to a higher point of elevation than man, unaided by the grace of God, has ever been known to reach;—“ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of God;”‡ then how infinitely precious will the promise of the Spirit appear. Knowing that “in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth nothing good;” that “the carnal mind is enmity with God;” and that “they who are in the flesh cannot please God;” knowing too, that “to be carnally minded is death,” and that they “who have not the Spirit of Christ are none of his:” knowing that we must be “pure in heart,” or we shall never “see God;” that we must be “merciful,” or we shall never “obtain mercy;” that we must from the heart forgive men their trespasses, or we

* Psalm li, 6.

† Ibid. 10.

‡ Matt. v. 20.

shall never obtain forgiveness: O how shall we exult in the promise of the Saviour, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."* O how transporting to us will be those gracious words, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink: he that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."† Yes; we must drink of this living water, or we perish for ever.

And were it not that the heart is alienated from the life of God, every man would thirst after this living water with far greater avidity, than the thirsty hart ever panted after the water-brooks. Were we not blinded by sin, we should identify holiness with true happiness: we should discover in our apostacy the original cause of all our woe; and should feel the deepest conviction, that, to recover back our lost felicity, we must be "renewed after the image of him who created us." Filled with abhorrence of sin as the sole author of our ruin, we should devote it to utter destruction; and seek occasions of mortifying and subduing it. Sensible that true peace and satisfaction will remain strangers to our breasts, until the image of God is restored in our souls, O how fervently should we beseech God to retrace its living characters! To be redeemed from the curse of sin, great and unspeakable as the bles-

* Matt. v. 6.

† John vii. 37, 38.

sing indeed is, would be far from satisfying our enlarged and holy desires, if, after all, sin was to retain its dominion over us. "Bound by the chain of our sins," how bitterly should we bewail our cruel captivity; sentenced to perpetual bondage, how ceaselessly, yet unavailingly, should we sigh after "the freedom of the sons of God."

Is there, then, no release from the captivity of sin? Must we ever make the walls of our prison-house resound with the lamentation, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Must we ever remain in this hopeless bondage? Certainly we shall, if almighty power and grace do not set us free. To restore ourselves to our lost liberty is utterly impracticable.

Shall we then affirm that the task is beyond the power of God to perform. Cannot he, who made man upright, "create him anew in righteousness and true holiness?" And if he can do this, is it not setting bounds to his grace and compassion, to suppose that he will not exert this power? Surely if it be practicable to elevate a fallen sinner to the high standard of absolute perfection, it must be infinitely desirable that it should be effected. And no one will venture, I should think, to deny, that it is a work worthy the majesty of God. If there be any task fit to employ the exertion of his infinite power, it is that which baffles all energy short of omnipotence; it is that which

changes the guilty and the vile into the glorious image of his own immaculate purity. Will then the pure and the omnipotent abandon us to despair? No; blessed be his name, he has pitied us in our low estate; he has made ample provision for our restoration. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."*

The scheme of divine mercy includes not only pardon, but renovation in the image of God. He promises to give us a new heart, to create within us a right spirit; to write his law in our inward parts; to be our God and to make us his people. And that we may be impelled earnestly to seek this blessing, he connects obedience with salvation. For, were it possible to arrive at heaven by any other path than that of holy obedience, we might despise the promise of his Spirit. But having made this the only path to heaven, he has laid upon us the necessity of earnest supplication to him for the communication of his Spirit. Unassisted by the spirit of grace, we cannot do the will of God; and yet, if we would finally be saved, we must be found walking in the path of holy obedience. It is, therefore, plain, that without the spirit of grace we must perish for ever.

If no promises of grace were made to us in the gospel, the perfection of the christian standard of duty might justly fill us with alarm; it would

* Rom. v. 6.

be vain to expect salvation. And hence, no doubt, it is, that those, who regard the gospel dispensation as comprehending no provision for the renovation of our nature, have been led to reduce the standard of their duty to the measure of their own imaginary strength. To suppose a higher standard, while no supernatural aid was afforded them, would overwhelm them in absolute despair. For, whatever that standard might be, it is plain they must conform to it; and yet, on the supposition of its being infinitely above their reach, they could not rise to the level of it, and, consequently, could not be saved.

But considered in its connection with the promise of the Spirit, the perfection of the christian standard of duty need fill us with no alarm. It is perfectly consistent with the character of the gospel as "glad tidings of great joy." For, elevate that standard ever so high, the power of God can never fall below it. Suppose his requirements ever so great, his grace is still adequate to our wants; and the more perfect the rule of duty he prescribes, the more conspicuously is his grace displayed, in strengthening us to act up to this rule.

To magnify the grace of God, then, in the recovery of fallen man, we must form elevated conceptions of the standard of human obligation; to maintain the perfection of the christian standard of duty, we must ever keep in mind the mighty

energy of the grace of God. The grace of the gospel, and the perfection of its rule of duty, are so involved the one in the other, that they cannot be separated. To deny the grace of God absolutely necessitates us to lower the standard of duty: to impair the perfection of that standard, diminishes the necessity, and, consequently, lessens the value, of the promises of divine grace. For the less we are required to perform, the less need have we of the spirit of grace to enable us to perform it. On the contrary, the more arduous the service is which is appointed us, the more earnestly and importunately shall we seek supplies of grace to help our infirmities.

If it be true, therefore, that the gospel is "*the ministration of the Spirit*," it is perfectly consistent with its character as "glad tidings of great joy," that it should highly elevate the standard of human duty. Had we no previous knowledge of the fact, we should conclude this from its being characterized as "the ministration of the Spirit:" for in no other way could the value of that gracious provision be made to appear. That it has done this, the slightest acquaintance with the New Testament will suffice to convince us. The Sermon on the Mount, as it is called, recorded by St. Matthew towards the very beginning of his gospel, alone proves this. In that discourse our blessed Saviour, as if to correct all misapprehension as to the tendency of his doctrine, and the design of

his mission, gives this early caution to his hearers; “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to *fulfil*.—For I say unto you, That *except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*”*

Let no one, however, suppose, from what has been advanced, as to the necessity of obedience in order to salvation, and of the importance of the promise of the spirit of grace to help our infirmity, that eternal life is, in any degree, the *merited reward* of obedience; or that the Spirit of God is imparted to believers *to enable them to merit* that reward. Nothing can be more absurd than such a supposition; nor can any thing be more flatly contradictory to the whole tenour of the New Testament. Of this ample proof will be afforded as we proceed. The truth is, that the spirit of grace bestowed upon the faithful, is *the fruit of the Redeemer’s righteousness*; and is given to those who believe, not to enable them to obtain justification before God, but as *the seal of their acceptance*; as the divine token that they are *already justified through the perfect righteousness of him in whom they have believed*.

This doctrine is so clearly taught us in the holy scriptures, that it is really matter of surprise, how they, who admit the doctrine of the gift of

* Matt. v. 17, 20.

the Holy Spirit, can have overlooked the channel by which that gift is conveyed. To acknowledge that man stands in need of the aids of God's Spirit to enable him to do the will of God, though certainly an important part of a Christian's confession, is not the whole which the honour of divine grace requires of us, in order to our being made the happy recipients of this blessing. We must distinctly recognize it *as the fruit of Christ's mediation*. On this subject the word of God is most explicit. For thus speaks our great Redeemer himself; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, *he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread of life which cometh down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*"*—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, *except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*"† In what sense these mysterious words are to be

* John vi. 47—51.

† Ibid. 53—57.

understood, we learn from what is added by way of elucidation; "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."* By which we are taught, that to the sacrifice of Christ we are indebted for the gift of the Spirit; and, that by faith in his atoning sacrifice, we become partakers of this heavenly gift. I know of no other consistent interpretation.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been taught by some in a way, which wholly excludes the consideration of the mysterious channel through which it flows to us; and in so doing, strips this glorious doctrine of divine revelation of every peculiarity which renders it so offensive to human pride. The assistance which the Spirit affords to all good men, to enable them to do the will of God, is by such persons represented, rather as a debt, which the justice of God owes to us, than as a gift of pure and most sovereign grace. Why it is so considered, I will endeavour briefly to explain.

It may be traced then, to two obvious fallacies. First, it supposes that the obedience which God requires of his people constitutes *their title* to eternal life, and is necessary to *purchase* for them the heavenly inheritance; and secondly, it assumes as an axiom, *that God is in justice bound to furnish*

* John vi. 63.

his creatures with every assistance which is indispensably necessary to a compliance with his will. Now, as it is impossible not to perceive the necessity of the Spirit's aid, to enable men to do the will of God, it is inferred that God is bound to communicate his Spirit to those who ask it, in order to enable them to do that, which, without such assistance, they would be unable to perform.

Now if heaven were, as this reasoning assumes, to be conferred upon men as the *merited* reward of their obedience, and if their inability to comply with the revealed will of God without divine assistance, were of a *physical*, and not of a *moral* nature, the inference drawn from these premises would be just. Nothing, however, can be more plainly taught us in the word of God, than this truth, that "*eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ:*"* nothing is more easily demonstrated, than that man's inability to serve God is *entirely of a moral nature*; an inability, which is so far from exculpating the guilt of his disobedience, that it *constitutes the very measure of that guilt*. But if so, divine justice can lie under no possible obligation to remove that inability. If, therefore, the Spirit of God is poured out upon the weak and sinful children of men, it is not because God is in justice bound to bestow that gift upon them. On the contrary, the gift of the Spirit is among

* Rom. vi. 23.

the most astonishing manifestations of the riches of his grace:

Nor is it true, that the Spirit of God, when bestowed upon the faithful, assists them to perform a *meritorious* obedience; or in any way assists them to *procure* eternal life for themselves. On the contrary, the very gift of the Holy Spirit *comprehends within it the gift of eternal life*. It is the same spirit which now regenerates and sanctifies the believer, that is the seminal principle of his future and eternal glory: so that he who hath the Spirit of God dwelling within him, has *already commenced*, if I may so speak, the career of immortality. It is not merely promised to him, that he shall at the resurrection of the dead be raised up by the power of Christ, to die no more: it is declared of him, that he *already lives*; that he *has entered* on a state of being which shall endure for ever, and that he shall never die. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but *is passed* from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and *now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: *and they that hear shall live.*”* And again, “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, *hath eternal life*; and I will raise him up at the last day.”† And what that eternal life

* John v. 24, 25. † Ibid. vi. 54.

is, our Lord afterwards explains; “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, *dwelleth in me, and I in him*: as the living Father hath sent me, and *I live by the Father*; so he that eateth me, *even he shall live by me.*”* From which it is most evident, that by the words “eternal life” he did not intend a mere perpetuation of that principle of life which is common to all mankind. The life of which he here speaks, is a life immediately derived from *the inhabitation of the Spirit of Christ*. It is by his dwelling in them, and they in him, that his people are to live.

To mark more strongly the distinction between merely animal existence, and that *eternal life* which is promised to all true believers, I may observe, first, that *eternal life* is not promised as a *future* blessing, not to be enjoyed by the faithful till *after* the resurrection, and as the *consequence* of it; but as a life to be *immediately* imparted to them, and whose communication should *precede* the resurrection of the body. Hence it is affirmed, that he who believeth, *hath* eternal life: not that he shall hereafter enjoy it. Hence, too, the peculiar order in which *eternal life* and a *future resurrection of the body* are placed in the promises of Christ. It is not said of believers, that they shall be raised from the dead, and shall have eternal life; as it would have been, if the future resurrection were to precede the enjoyment of

* John vi. 56, 57.

eternal life. On the contrary, eternal life takes the *precedence* in the promise of Christ, as it also does in the order of its communication. “This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, *may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.*”* And so, in the words I have quoted above, “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, *hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.*”†

But further, the life promised by Christ to his people, is a life similar in its nature and principle to that of Christ himself. “As the living Father hath sent me, and *I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*”‡ Whatever constitutes the principle of life in the Son, is to become, according to this promise, the principle of life in all true believers. But the principle of life in the Son is here distinctly specified, so as to leave us in no doubt respecting it; it is *the indwelling of the Father in the Son*. Hence it follows, that the principle of life in believers, is *the indwelling of Christ in them*. That it is so, is not left even to inference, it is explicitly asserted; “He that eateth my flesh, *dwelleth in me, and I in him.*”§

For this blessing, the Saviour interceded on behalf of all his people, even to the end of time, in that prayer which he offered up in the presence

* John vi. 40.

† Ibid. 54.

‡ Ibid. 57.

§ Ibid. 56.

of his disciples, the evening preceding his sufferings; "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; *that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; *that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one*; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."* That this prayer of Christ for his people refers to the outpouring of his Spirit, must be evident to all. To a future life it cannot refer; as the object of the communication of the blessing here interceded for is expressly said to be, to convince the world of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of God's especial love to his disciples; an effect obviously confined within the limits of the present life. And, being offered in behalf of *all* his people *to the end of time*, the blessing here interceded for, must be one which is common to the faithful in all ages; and, consequently, cannot refer to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. It can only intend the gift of the Spirit in his enlightening, regenerating, and sanctifying operations.

But does it not follow from this, that the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the gift of eternal life, are

* John xvii. 20—23.

identically the same? To my mind the inference is so plain, that I cannot see any possible way of escaping from it. Nor let it be thought a matter of indifference, whether we come to this conclusion or not. The consequences resulting from its adoption are in the highest degree important. For if the indwelling of God's Spirit in the heart be the eternal life promised by Christ to believers, then obedience to the will of God is the fruit of eternal life already begun in the soul, and not the *price* paid to procure it. We obey, not that we may live hereafter; but *because we already live*. And this is exactly consonant with that saying of Christ; "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."* We are equally indebted to Christ for our fruitfulness in good works, as we are for our eternal salvation. They both flow from one common source, the gift of his Holy Spirit. It is *he* who now sanctifies believers in the present world; and it is *he* who will quicken our mortal bodies at the last day, and transform them into the likeness of Christ's glorified body. Of this we have an express testimony; for thus writes our Apostle; "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of

* John xv. 4, 5.

sin; but the *Spirit is life* because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him, that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead *shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*"* Yes, that same Spirit, who now quickens the souls of believers to a new and holy life, shall, at the final day, quicken their very bodies, which, because of sin, are first doomed to see corruption.

But if the Spirit of God, already bestowed upon the faithful, be itself the fountain of eternal life, agreeably to that promise of the Saviour, "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life;"† then certainly it follows, that the Spirit of God is not given to such as believe, to enable them to acquire for themselves a title to future blessedness. It is not afforded as means necessary to assist them in obtaining justification, but as the seal of their present state of justification, and as the fruit of that righteousness of their blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, by which they are already constituted righteous before God. But this doctrine must not be passed over so slightly; it deserves a more attentive consideration than we have yet bestowed upon it; and, if I am not greatly mistaken, the remarks which will be submitted to the reader in the following chapter, will throw considerable light on two of the most

* Rom. viii. 10, 11.

† John iv. 14.

important doctrines of the word of God; *justification*, and *regeneration*; doctrines which lie at the very foundation of all saving knowledge of divine truth; but which, even to the present day, notwithstanding the light thrown on them by the glorious Reformation, still continue involved in very great obscurity.

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CHAP. VII.

ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

THE reader will recollect, that it was formerly stated, that justification includes in it, besides the remission of past sins, *the gracious award of life*; and hence, that, wherever it really takes place, it is invariably accompanied with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I feel anxious to establish this position. It is the hinge on which some of the most important truths of divine revelation turn. It is the key which opens some of its most sublime, sanctifying, and consolatory mysteries. It gives to faith its assurance, to love its ardours, to hope its immoveable confidence. It casts a light on every region of revealed truth, dispelling the mists of error in which they have been, in some degree accidentally, in some degree intentionally, involved. In fine, it gives prominence to the work of Christ, exhibiting him to the eye of faith as “the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last,” of the christian profession.

To understand the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, it is necessary that we advert to the nature of that righteousness which the law of God demands, in order to our justification before God. I may observe then, that to be justified by the law, it was necessary that a perfect obedience was rendered to its requisitions. A negative righteousness, that is to say, the mere absence of actual transgression, would not satisfy its demands, or give any title to the reward promised by it to the obedient. Its language was, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments; which, if a man do, he shall live in them."* To entitle to the reward of life, a positive performance of its prescribed duties is, by this condition, most obviously required. But if perfect obedience to the law of God be necessary to obtain "justification of life," who can hope to live? Blessed be God, his holy word supplies us with an answer to this question. It declares that "*by the obedience of one*, the many shall be made righteous,"† and so become entitled to eternal life. "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."‡

The mighty task which the Son of God undertook to accomplish, included far more than merely satisfying the penalty of disobedience.

* Lev. xviii. 5. † Rom. v. 19. ‡ Ibid. 17.

Had he only paid the penalty of the law, the sole effect of his vicarious death would have been, exempting his people from the obligation to suffer. To entitle them to *life*, he must also *obey* the law. For it is not to be supposed, that the gospel has made any, even the slightest change in the principles of God's moral administration. Whatever was requisite under a covenant of law to give a title to life, is still requisite; and, though it be true, that life is awarded to the guilty and the disobedient, it is not because God has abandoned that principle, on which he formerly professed to administer his righteous government; viz. of connecting righteousness with life. This would be a virtual acknowledgment, that the condition was too hard, and that he had been compelled to recede from his original demands, from an experience of the impracticability of enforcing them consistently with the ends of his righteous administration. The scheme of our salvation contains no such surrender on the part of the Deity. The amazing wonder of that scheme consists, in its comprehending a plan for awarding life to the ungodly, *in consideration of a perfect righteousness*. "For therein is *the righteousness of God, which is by faith*, revealed to faith."* And if this glorious scheme of the wisdom and love of God be but once clearly apprehended, the effect which it will produce on the mind will be

* Rom. i. 17.

that which St. Paul, once a proud pharisee, experienced, when he beheld, in the glorified Redeemer, "the Lord his righteousness." Before this discovery of God's method of justifying the ungodly, he had trusted in himself that he was righteous. But when Christ was revealed to him as "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,"* the infinite grandeur and glory of this wonderful contrivance of God; the perfection and beauty of the righteousness of Christ, when compared, or rather contrasted, with his own boasted righteousness; and the blessed consequences resulting from it to the faithful, so far surpassing in their glory the rewards which he had hoped to merit by his own obedience; that he abandons the refuge in which he had formerly trusted, as "a refuge of lies," and flies to "the hope set before him in the gospel." And the more intimate his acquaintance with the righteousness of God revealed for a sinner's justification, the more profound his admiration of it, and the more earnest his desire to be interested in "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." It was at the close of his christian profession that he thus wrote to the saints at Philippi; "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all

* Rom. x. 4.

things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”* Would to God that the holy fervour of St. Paul, when expressing his faith in the righteousness of Christ, characterized all who bear the christian name. That it does not, can only be ascribed to the different light in which many, professing that name, regard the person and work of him in whom they profess to trust. The following observations on that part of the glorious plan of our salvation, by which Christ becomes at once the righteousness and the life of his people, will, I hope, tend, under the blessing of God, to render Christ more precious to the pious reader, and enable him to adopt as his own, with a full perception of its meaning and force, the glowing language of St. Paul, just quoted.

How then, it will be asked, did Christ become the righteousness of God to every one that believeth? Let the words of St. Paul supply an answer to this inquiry; “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made

* Philip. iii, 7—11.

of a woman, *made under the law*, to redeem us that were under the law, *that we might receive the adoption of sons.*" * These words comprehend the whole mystery of our justification through the righteousness of Christ. "He was made of a woman," says the Apostle; that is, he took upon him the likeness of men; for, had he not been "found in fashion as a man," he could not have rendered to the law that obedience which it required. His incarnation, therefore, was the first step towards the accomplishment of his great design—the bringing in an everlasting righteousness. Without this he could not have obeyed the law. But having become incarnate, he was capacitated to obey it; for he had now assumed "the form of a servant." And this obedience he actually performed; for it is added, "he was made under the law;" or, as the words ought to have been rendered, "he was made under law;" † that is, he was placed *under a dispensation of law*; being required, as the indispensable condition of justifying his people, to render to the law a perfect and sinless obedience. To him no grace, that is, no favour, was to be shewn. Impartial and rigorous justice was appointed to weigh in her righteous balance his every thought, and word, and deed. It is this idea, and not his subjection to the Mosaic law, which St. Paul intended by the expression, "he was made under law."

* Gal. iv. 4, 5,

† *υπο νομον*, without the article.

It was this subjection to law, which imposed the necessity of appointing to the work so exalted a personage as the Son of God. In him there was no sin, not only actual, but possible. And had it been *possible* that he could have sinned, the whole scheme of divine mercy might have been frustrated; and then, man failing again in his second, as in his first federal head, must have perished without hope of redemption. Had the obedience of the highest created being been adequate to justify the whole race of man; that is, had it afforded a consideration at all commensurate with the benefits which were to follow from it, in the gift of everlasting life to all believers—which we cannot for a moment consent to allow; yet, even granting this, no created being, however exalted his high rank in the creation, could have given beforehand any security that he would accomplish the task. Even angelic spirits, pure as they were first formed, had failed in their allegiance, and for the just punishment of their rebellion, had been cast down to hell, there to reap for ever the sad fruits of their apostacy. Some indeed remained firm and unshaken amidst sedition and revolt; but to have secured even them from the *possibility* of defection, would have required the exercise of that grace, which, from the very nature of the scheme of redemption, it was necessary the Deity should withhold. For he who should undertake to redeem those who were “under law,” must

himself be "*made under law*;" in other words, must be placed under a dispensation of rigid and impartial justice; the very principle of which would have been violated, had any favour, any thing beyond what justice was bound to do for him who was under such a dispensation, been conferred on the substitute of sinners.

But, by appointing the Son of God to the great work, every difficulty is removed. While his incarnation capacitates him to yield an obedience to the law; his divine nature, ineffably united to his humanity, secured that obedience from the possibility of defect. Being one with God, his will could not but be in perfect unison with the will of God: and in this perfect conformity consists the essence and perfection of true holiness. Such a conformity, the blessed Jesus ever exhibited. "My meat," said he, "is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."* Nothing could for one moment divert him from his fixed purpose to obey. While the first Adam was completely vanquished by one single assault of the subtle adversary; the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, bore unshaken his most furious and repeated onsets. Neither men, nor devils, in the full height of their power, when permitted by God to employ against his Son every stratagem which subtlety or malice could devise, and when long experience may be supposed to have perfected

* John iv. 34.

the deceiver and destroyer of our race in the knowledge and practice of every possible artifice of seduction, could obtain over the blessed Jesus one momentary triumph. He could anticipate the last great struggle in the full confidence of victory; "The prince of this world cometh," says he to his afflicted followers, "and hath nothing in me."* And yet, to ensure his perfect obedience, no favour, no act of grace, nothing beyond what justice itself required, was extended to the Son of God. That the *Spirit of holiness* was poured out upon him without measure, to anoint him to his work, is true. But to the Son of God this was no act of *grace*; he could claim it as his due: for being the "Eternal Life," he was himself the fountain of the Spirit of life. And hence it was, that the Spirit was given to him without measure. Still, however, he was "made *under law*."

The nature of that dispensation under which our Redeemer would be placed, as a dispensation of pure and rigid justice, was very strikingly shadowed forth by the ark of the testimony, into which Moses was commanded by God to put the two tables of the law. The history of this transaction is so peculiar, and yet, probably so little adverted to by many, that the reader will, I hope, excuse me, if I quote the sacred narrative at length. The fullest account of it we find in the book of Deuteronomy, at the beginning of the

* John xiv. 30.

tenth chapter. It runs thus; "At that time," (that is to say, immediately after the people of Israel had, at the intercession of Moses, been graciously forgiven their sin in worshipping the golden calf, and when, as has been before observed, the covenant of Mount Sinai was virtually at an end, and the covenant of grace made with Abraham had been renewed with his posterity,) "*at that time, the Lord said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood: and I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou breakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark. And I made an ark of shittim-wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in mine hand. And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the Lord spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire, in the day of the assembly: and the Lord gave them unto me. And I turned myself, and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the Lord commanded me.*"

How confirmatory of the observations above made, on the nature of that covenant of law under which the divine Redeemer was placed, is the whole of this transaction from first to last. The words written on the two tables of stone, which Moses was commanded to prepare, were,

as Moses observes, "the words that were in the first tables," or, as he afterwards more emphatically expresses it, they were "according to the first writing," even "the ten commandments, which the Lord spake in the mount out of the midst of the fire, in the day of the assembly." It was, therefore, the law of the covenant of works, already broken by the people of Israel, which was to be put into the ark. It was that very law, which had been delivered by the mouth of Jehovah himself, out of the midst of the fire;—that law, which made no provision for the exercise of mercy, even in case of one single violation of its authority, but which threatened death as the penalty of one offence;—that law, which, when actually transgressed by the whole Israelitish nation, gave them up to utter excision;—a sentence which Jehovah would have executed, "had not Moses," that illustrious type of Christ, the true Mediator, "stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them."*—This very law, so rigorous and unrelenting in its demands, Moses is commanded to put into the ark. I scarcely need observe, that the ark itself was an illustrious type of Christ. Such has it been considered by the church in all ages. To its typical reference to the Messiah, the writer to the Hebrews bears testimony.† And to this striking emblem of Christ as "the end of the law for righteousness," David,

* Psalm cvi. 23.

† Heb. ix. 4.

or rather I should say, the Spirit of Christ, speaking by the mouth of David, evidently alludes, where he says, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, *thy law is within my heart.*"* And, considering the ark as an acknowledged type of Christ, the import of the transaction which Moses records in the words I have above quoted, cannot be mistaken.

But to return from this short digression. I was observing that Christ, having been made under law, perfectly obeyed the will of God. And by this his obedience, he became entitled to claim the promised reward of life. The law had said, "The man that doeth these things shall live by them." It was therefore but just, that as Christ had suffered death as the penalty of sin, so in like manner, he should enjoy *life*, as the reward of *righteousness*. The law could not, for the purpose of *expiation*, demand more than the *payment of the penalty*. To *expiate sin*, therefore, it was only necessary that he should *die*. But he had done more than this; he had obeyed the law, as well as endured its curse; and this obedience he had rendered by virtue of his own essential godhead, mysteriously united to his humanity. This, by

* Psalm xl, 6—8.

entitling his humanity to a communication, without measure, of the Spirit of holiness, even though placed under a dispensation of rigid justice, secured his obedience from the possibility of defect. Now, by the very terms and express condition of the law, he had acquired a right to life, as the reward of his perfect obedience. And it seemed expedient, that the life given to him, should be immediately derived from that nature, which was the true fountain of all his purity and perfection; and this was the godhead dwelling in him bodily: that, as the nature which he had assumed, and which had incurred the penalty of transgression, exposed him to the pains of death; so the nature which assumed to itself humanity for the purpose of expiation, and which gave to his obedience all its dignity and perfection, should, in its turn, after expiation was made, communicate its own divine fulness and glory to the humanity which it had assumed, and by which it was capacitated to render an obedience to the law. To have merely restored the same life which Christ had offered up upon the cross in expiation of sin, would neither have demonstrated the true source of his perfect righteousness, nor would it have been a reward at all adequate to the infinite merit of his obedience; besides which, as I observed before, it would have been a surrendering back on the part of divine justice of the penalty it had just before so rigidly exacted. To which I may add, that the

mere restoration of that animal life which expired on the tree, would not have answered the purpose of our salvation, as the reader will soon perceive. But, by his resurrection to a new and divine life, every difficulty is removed. The blessed Jesus is amply repaid for all his toils, labours, and sufferings; the principle of his rectitude is strikingly manifested; divine justice is not made to relent its former severity; and ample provision is made for effecting that great work, which, on his resurrection from the dead, the Redeemer had yet to perform. For when God raised him from the dead, he “set him at his own right hand,” “put all things under his feet,” and constituted him the “head over all things to his church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

The life to which our Redeemer was raised up by the power of God, he received in his character of the head of his body, the church. For he was under no obligation to obey the law, except what arose from the federal relation which he voluntarily engaged to sustain. And that he did not resort to this, as an expedient for gaining any accession to his original glory, cannot be supposed, unless that which is already infinite, can admit of increase. It was grace alone which induced him to undertake to recover lost and ruined man. The glory to which he is now exalted, is but the same glory which he had with

the Father before the world began. It is not his deity, which is either ennobled or exalted. This admits of no addition, no increase, either of glory or of blessedness. It is the humanity, associated to the godhead for the purpose of redemption, that is glorified. And this God exalts to his own right hand; and to his Son as Immanuel, God and Man in one mysterious person, he commits the government of all worlds. To him, as the Mediator and Advocate of his people, he gives all power in heaven and on earth; and assigns to him the glorious work of recovering a lost and ruined world; of gathering together in one all things in heaven and on earth; of quickening the dead in trespasses and sins; of renewing the moral creation of God in all its original beauties; and causing, to use the figurative language of prophecy, "the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose."

In entitling himself by his obedience to claim life as a merited reward, it is plain our blessed Redeemer could have no possible regard to himself: for he had already in himself "the fountain of life." "In him," as the essential word of God, "was life."* His obedience must, consequently, have been rendered to the law, for the purpose of procuring the promised reward of life for his people. It was to "bring in an everlasting righteousness," such as should entitle him to

* John i. 4.

bestow eternal life on all his people, that he consented to be "made of a woman, made under law." For the great Redeemer can only be rewarded with life in the persons of his people. In no other way can he be recompensed for his infinitely meritorious obedience.

Nor should it be forgotten, that the glory to which the Father covenanted to exalt his Son, was the glory of working out salvation for his people. This was "the joy which was set before him," and which led him to assume the humble "form of a servant." It was this which induced him to leave for a time the bosom of the Father, and to dwell with men. He had before received from the Father commission to create: and this commission he had fully executed; for "by him were all things created in heaven and on earth." But now he receives from the Father authority to save. And fired, if I may thus speak of the Eternal Word, with the godlike ambition of becoming the author of the new, as he already was of the first creation, he undertakes this second, and more glorious work. More glorious, I say. For to infinite wisdom, and irresistible power, he must now add unsullied purity, indefectible rectitude, and matchless grace. These perfections of deity too he possessed; and resolved to show, that the holiness and love of God were not eclipsed by his wisdom or his power, he accepts the task assigned to him, and consents for a time to vail the glories

of his eternal godhead in human flesh. He assumes "the form of a servant," and, though Lord of all, himself submits to obey. And having performed his appointed service, he claims his merited reward. And what reward does he ask for? O godlike compassion! O wondrous grace! he claims to be made the Head and Saviour of a lost and ruined world! Incapable of receiving any addition to his own glory or blessedness, he is satisfied to be made the dispenser of those rewards which he had become entitled to claim. He had purchased life, and he asks to give life to a dying world. This his request is granted; for how could it in justice be refused him? He is made "the head of his body, the church;" and "power is given to him over all flesh, that he may give eternal life"* to all his redeemed people. This power he receives on his resurrection from the dead. It is then that he is invested with this glorious prerogative of quickening the dead. For the life to which he is exalted at the right hand of God bears no resemblance to his life while here upon the earth. The latter was frail and mortal. But the life to which he was quickened is immortal, divine, and vivifying. And in this respect it differed essentially from that principle of life which Adam received, when God breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul. This essential difference St. Paul notices in the

* John xvii. 2.

contrast which he draws between the first and the second Adam. "The first Adam," he observes, "was made a *living soul*, the last Adam a *quickening spirit*."*

And this spirit of life, received by our divine Redeemer in the character of the head of the church, is the believer's security that he shall finally be saved. And O what ample security does it afford! Well might our Redeemer say, and well may the sheep of Christ rejoice in that gracious saying; "My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."† Were Christ's sheep to perish, even the feeblest of them for whom he gave his life a ransom, Christ would himself lose a part of his reward. And not only so, but the honour of divine justice itself would be tarnished; as it would be in fact a violation of an express compact into which the Father had originally entered with him. For, before his incarnation, it had been solemnly promised him, that "he should see his seed, that he should prolong his days, and that the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand;" that "by his knowledge he should justify many, because he should bear their iniquities."‡ The justice and faithfulness of God then

* 1 Cor. xv. 45.

† John x. 27, 28.

‡ Isaiah liii. 10, 11.

both stand equally pledged for the final salvation of the redeemed.

On this rock of salvation may every believer in Christ rest with firm confidence. Let him know in whom he has believed; even in him who identifies his own glory with his people's salvation; in him, who, by his perfect obedience to the law, has merited the reward of life, and may justly claim that reward as his righteous due; but who, in consequence of his own essential dignity and infinite perfection as the fountain of life, is utterly incapable of being rewarded according to the infinite merit of his obedience, but as he is made the author of eternal salvation to his faithful people. And when to this is added, that the Father himself has most solemnly promised to give his Son a reward adequate to his worthiness, and commensurate with the largest desires of his heart, so that the infinite compassion and grace which urged him to undertake the cause of perishing sinners, should repose in it with most perfect satisfaction; what ground of hope, nay, of confident triumph, can the true believer want more? Well may *he* have peace with God who is thus justified by faith in Jesus Christ! Well may he, while trusting in the power of his risen and ascended Lord, his righteousness and his life, bid a holy defiance to all the enemies of his salvation. To destroy the feeblest of

Christ's sheep, they must pluck them out of his hand who died to redeem, and who arose to save them. The task they undertake is nothing short of spoiling him of the reward of his obedience; of the only reward he can ever possibly receive in recompense of all his toils; of a reward secured to him by the promise and oath of God; and this, now that all things in heaven and earth are made subject to him. And can they succeed? They cannot. "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand;" is the confident assurance which our Redeemer has graciously given us. Let the sheep of Christ rejoice in this saying of their "good shepherd," and respond to it in the language of St. Paul—for his holy confidence becomes every true believer;—"I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

But it will be asked, if eternal life is thus infallibly secured to all true believers by the righteousness of Christ, does not this rather exclude, than demonstrate, the necessity of personal sanctification? This question is highly important, and merits to be distinctly answered. But perhaps it is not so difficult of reply as some

* Rom. viii. 38, 39.

may suppose; and of this I hope fully to satisfy the reader before I dismiss the subject.

We have seen in our inquiries into the characteristic peculiarities of a dispensation of law, that it requires perfect obedience, and that, in case of failure, even in the slightest degree, it rigidly exacts the forfeited penalty. We have also seen that this was the character of the covenant originally made with our great progenitor; and that he, having broken it, became immediately liable to the exaction of the penalty. Now the penalty which God had threatened was *death*, that is, the loss of life. But this loss included in it two things essentially different, the one involving in it natural, the other spiritual, or moral evil. For when it is said that God “breathed” into man “the breath of life; and man became a living soul;”* we are not to suppose that the life here spoken of comprehends only animal existence. This he had in common with the brute, or irrational creation, concerning whom the same language is not used. The words must therefore import a life peculiar to him; a life of which none of all the various inhabitants of the earth partook but he alone. And this was spiritual life; a life by which he was capacitated for the peculiar exercises and enjoyments of spiritual being; in other words, of seeing, enjoying and glorifying God. As by the animal life he held communion with the sensible creation; so by

* Genesis ii. 7.

this spiritual life he communed with the invisible Creator. The former constituted the life of the body, the latter the life of the soul. Each component part of his mysterious nature, which formed, as it were, the intermediate link between the visible and the invisible worlds, was thus quickened to a life appropriate to itself. It was therefore the loss of this twofold being, which was denounced by the awful threatening, "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely *die*." It was to this twofold death, that the transgressor became liable when he partook of the forbidden fruit. No sooner had he broken the divine command, than he ceased to commune with God. For such high communion he felt no longer any relish. His Maker, whose reviving presence he had once courted and prized as his highest felicity, he now shuns as an object of dread. "Adam and his wife hid themselves," says the sacred narrative, "from the presence of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden."* What a lively, but affecting picture is here presented of the nature of spiritual death—alienation from the life of God! And this part of the sad consequence of his apostacy Adam has transmitted to all his descendants. For that they are "alienated from the life of God," the conscience of every man must testify. By nature all alike are enemies to God. They have no love to his perfections, no regard for his authority, no

* Genesis iii. 8.

delight in his pure and holy presence. He is not in all their thoughts. I speak not of a few, or even of a large proportion only of the children of Adam. The word of unerring truth declares, "They are *all* gone aside, they are *all together* become filthy, there is *none* that doeth good, *no, not one.*"* Now this alienation of man from God is the consequence of the sentence of death incurred by the one offence of Adam. "By one man *sin* entered into the world." "Through the offence of one the many *died.*"†

Now as spiritual death was the fruit of the one offence of the first Adam, who is in this, if we exactly reverse the consequences of the fall, "the type of him that was to come," that is, Jesus Christ; so spiritual life is the fruit of the obedience of the second Adam. If it were not so, the parallel would altogether fail; and, instead of gaining more by the second than we lost by our first federal head, as St. Paul affirms, the most awful consequences of the fall would remain unrepaired. And indeed not only so, but if spiritual life were not a consequence resulting to us from the obedience of Christ, and as a fruit of our justification by faith in his righteousness, no man could be saved. For we receive no blessings under the new covenant of grace, but what he has procured for us by his obedience unto death. Though a scheme of the purest mercy, and most sovereign

* Psalm xiv. 3.

† Romans v. 12, 15.

grace, as it respects sinners themselves, the great mystery of our salvation, and that which displays its amazing wisdom, is, that, in relation to Christ, the dispensation of these rich favours is a matter of strict justice and right. *We* receive them, indeed, as flowing from the infinite and self-originating love of God: but not so our Redeemer; *he* claims them as the purchase of his infinitely meritorious obedience and death.

The sacred scriptures uniformly ascribe our regeneration to *Christ* as its author. It is indeed by the Spirit that he regenerates; but then it should be remembered, that it is in him, as the fountain of all grace, that the Spirit is treasured up for the benefit of his people; and that the right to bestow the Spirit was conferred upon him as the reward of his perfect righteousness. Of this truth no reader of the Gospel of St. John can for one moment doubt. Not to remind the reader of such sayings as these, “*In him was life;*”—“If thou knewest the gift of God, and *who it is* that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of *him*, and *and he would have given thee* living water;”—“As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, *even so the Son quickeneth whom he will;*”—“*I am the living bread* which came down from heaven;”—*—not to dwell upon these striking testimonies, and which it would be very easy to multiply, what in-

* John i. 4; iv. 10; v. 21; vi. 51.

terpretation can we put upon the following words addressed by Christ to his afflicted disciples, with a view to comfort them in the melancholy prospect of his speedy departure? “It is expedient for you *that I go away*; for *if I go not away*, the Comforter will not come unto you; but *if I depart, I will send him unto you*.”* Or what shall we say to that promise of Christ recorded and explained by the same Evangelist in the words which follow? “If any man thirst, let him come *unto me*, and drink; *He that believeth on me*, as the scripture hath said, *out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*. This spake he,” adds the historian by way of comment, “*of the Spirit* which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”† I can assign to such words no meaning, except it be, that the dispensation of the Spirit is the prerogative of Christ, bestowed upon him by the Father as the reward of his perfect obedience.

Some may perhaps consider it as a matter of comparative indifference, whether or not we trace the gift of the Holy Spirit to the righteousness of Christ as its procuring cause, provided we do but admit the necessity of the influence of the Spirit to renew the heart. To such a doctrine, however, I am utterly unable to subscribe; and I feel no hesitation in saying, that it is to the prevalence of

* John xvi. 7.

† Ibid. vii. 37—39.

this sentiment, leading to unscriptural views of divine influence, that we may ascribe, among other causes, the rejection of the doctrine of personal sanctification. Contrary to the uniform practice of the sacred writers, many modern divines have spoken of the work of the Holy Spirit in a manner which would seem to imply a total forgetfulness on their part of the righteousness of Christ as the procuring cause of this heavenly gift. Contrary to that saying of Christ, “He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you,”* the Spirit is made to bear testimony to his own work, and not to the work of Christ. And the consequence has been such as we might have anticipated; viz. that others have denied the Spirit’s work as a sanctifier. And for this reason; they consider it as dishonourable to the finished work of Christ, in whom all true believers are said to be complete. And certainly the apprehension thus expressed for the honour of Christ would be just and reasonable, if the work of the Spirit were altogether independent on the work of Christ. But taking the view of regeneration and sanctification which I have been endeavouring in the course of this and the preceding chapter to explain, nothing can be more absurd than such an apprehension.

Nor is this the only consequence which has

* John xvi. 14.

resulted from mistaken representations of the work of the Spirit. It has led to mistaken views of the justice of God, which, if the plan of redemption be but rightly apprehended, reigns and triumphs, not only in the sufferings and death of the blessed Redeemer, but in every other part of the scheme of our salvation; but which, according to the too frequent mode of unfolding that scheme, must be considered as resigning the throne of deity to the more lovely attribute of mercy, as soon as her vindictive claims were satisfied by the shedding of the Saviour's blood. But this is to array divine justice in most awful colours indeed. And no wonder that when she is never exhibited to the view of the imagination but clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, she should excite in the mind sentiments of terror and aversion. For in the death of the Redeemer we see only her awful severity. To understand her true character we must reverse the scene. For it is the prerogative of justice to *reward*, as well as to *punish*; and it is the glory of the gospel of our salvation to exhibit her in the exercise of this more delightful branch of her prerogative. Having vindicated the insulted honour of the law in the death of God's only begotten Son, when he became an offering for sin, she asserts her right of assigning to him the reward of his obedience. Having sheathed the sword of vengeance with which she had smitten the great Shepherd of the sheep, she

calls on him to awake from the sleep of death, and to receive from her own right hand the investiture of that universal dominion promised to his obedience. Loving righteousness, as well as hating iniquity, she cannot suffer so infinitely meritorious a work as that of the Son of God to pass unrequited. She claims for him the life he had purchased; and as he is himself "the Eternal Life," and can admit of no increase of his original glory, she confers on him the divine prerogative of bestowing eternal life on all his redeemed people. Thus indirectly justice herself pleads for the sinner's acceptance with God, since she has no way of testifying her love to righteousness, but by awarding life to those who plead the merit of their righteous surety. With such a plea to enforce their suit, the vilest, the most unworthy, need not, cannot despair. Not mercy alone, justice herself too is their friend. That God was just was a thought which once filled their minds with dismay; that God is just now fills them with joy and peace. And hence, even when deprecating the just severity of God, we hear the holy Psalmist pouring out this prayer to God, "Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications; *in thy faithfulness* answer me, and *in thy righteousness*. And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."* And in precisely the same spirit,

* Psalm cxliii. 1, 2.

and with the same views of the divine perfections, we find the beloved disciple extracting from the most tremendous of the divine attributes, tremendous I mean to a guilty sinner, the *faithfulness* and the *justice* of God, matter of holy triumph; “If we confess our sins, he is *faithful* and *just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

The regeneration and sanctification of believers is the effect of that spiritual life which they derive from Christ their exalted head. “I am the vine,” says he, “ye are the branches. *He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*”† And again, “*Because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*”‡ And this power to impart spiritual life to his people, our divine Redeemer received from the Father when he arose from the dead. It was then the Spirit of life entered into him; and by that Spirit he now quickens all who believe on his name.

That the resurrection of Christ forms a main article of christian belief, every reader of the New Testament must distinctly perceive. The recognition of it is spoken of as necessary to

* 1 John i. 9.

† John xv. 5, 6.

‡ Ibid. xiv. 19, 20.

salvation. For thus writes our Apostle; “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and *shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead*, thou shalt be saved.”* But the importance of this article of faith is not perhaps generally ascribed to its real cause. It has, by most writers on the subject, been represented, as consisting in the evidence it affords of the truth of Christianity; of the divinity of the Saviour’s mission. As Christ had predicted his own resurrection from the dead, he had voluntarily submitted that his character and pretensions should be decided by this infallible test. Consequently, had he always remained under the power of death, his prediction would have been falsified; and, according to his own test, his claims to the Messiahship would have been negatived.

But, important as the doctrine of Christ’s resurrection may be considered in this point of view, it may yet be confidently affirmed, that it is *not* in this circumstance that its importance alone, or even principally consists. To form proper conceptions of its bearings on the great work of our salvation, we must consult the sacred writers. They will inform us, that “*to this end* Christ both died, *and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*”† And again; “he was delivered for our offences, and *was raised*

* Rom. x. 9.

† Rom. xiv. 9.

again for our justification.”* And again; “if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, *we shall be saved by his life.*”† In short, when our great Redeemer arose from the dead, he arose to reign; to exercise that spiritual empire, which he will never cease to administer, until all the purposes of his mediatorial kingdom shall be fully accomplished. “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”‡

And what is the nature of that dominion he now exercises? With respect to his own people, I reply, he rules over them by the power of his Spirit, regenerating and sanctifying their hearts, until, having brought every thought into captivity to himself, he presents them faultless before the throne of God. For “*to this end* he both died, and rose, and revived.”

If indeed the resurrection of Christ were to be considered as simply the reanimating his lifeless body, by restoring to it that very life which expired on the cross, it would be difficult to shew any connection between the resurrection of Christ, and the regeneration and sanctification of his people. To connect them together, as it is plain they are connected in the word of God, we must understand, that when Christ arose from the dead, he arose to *the life of God*. The principle of life

* Rom iv. 25.

† Ib. v. 10.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 25.

in his risen humanity, was not the same with that which had expired on the tree. It was *the life of man* which he yielded up upon the cross; but it is *the life of God* by which he was reanimated. And hence, not only that amazing change which passed upon the human nature of our blessed Lord when he arose; but the power which he has ever since exerted in quickening and animating his body the church.

The resurrection of Christ is at once the type, and the principle, of the resurrection of his people to newness of life. It is the *type* or pattern of it. "Wherefore," says the Apostle to his Ephesian converts, "I cease not to make mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is *the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all*

things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."*

Of the glory to which our Redeemer was advanced by his resurrection from the dead, we could indeed have formed no conception, had he not been pleased to manifest himself after his ascension to glory, to some of his most favoured disciples; and had they not also, for the confirmation of our faith, have left upon record what they beheld. A vision of the glorified Saviour was granted to the beloved disciple in the Isle of Patmos, and it is thus he describes it; "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, *I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.*—And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him," says John, "I fell at his feet as dead. And

* Eph. i. 16—23.

he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; *I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth*, and was dead, and behold, *I am alive for evermore*, Amen, and *have the keys of hell and of death.*"* Where, in all this glorious representation, do we find any resemblance of the once hungry, thirsty, wearied, fainting, emaciated, bleeding, dying Saviour? Is this the man, who was born in a stable, and cradled in a manger; who wrought as a carpenter; who travelled as a pilgrim; who was indebted to a few pious women for sustenance and a home; who was dragged from prison to judgment, and from condemnation to a cross? Yes; this is he. "*I am he that was dead.*" But how altered! how transfigured! Whence this amazing change? The words of St. Paul furnish the only intelligible solution of this mystery; "*He was crucified through weakness, he liveth by the power of God.*"† And this mighty power of God, exerted in raising up his Son, and setting him at his own right hand, investing him with a name which is above every name, and with a power to which universal nature yields obedience; this is the pattern of that energy, which is exerted in quickening the dead in trespasses and sins. This, this is the glorious type of the believer's regeneration. "According to the working of that mighty power, which God wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own

* Rev. i. 10—18.

† 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

right hand," is "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe."

And, as the resurrection of Christ is the type, so it is the *principle*, the efficient cause of regeneration,—that spiritual resurrection, to which all who believe in Christ are raised by the power of God. "*Because I live,*" said Christ to his disconsolate disciples, "ye shall live also."* But this spirit of life he had not power to communicate until after his resurrection from the dead. For he communicates this life, not in his character of the Eternal Word, in whom life essentially resides; but as the *Incarnate Word*, who, having magnified the law, and made it honourable, has entitled himself to bestow eternal life on as many as the Father had given him. Now it is evident, that until his own humanity had become, by his resurrection from the dead, the well-spring, if I may so speak, of life, no living streams could issue thence to quicken and revive his people. This serves to explain the words I formerly quoted from St. John, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, *because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*" It was obviously necessary that he should himself receive of the Father the gift of the Spirit, before he could bestow that gift upon his people; and it was only through him, that they could be made partakers of it. "For as in Adam all die, so *in Christ* must all be made alive;" I mean

* John xiv. 19.

spiritually alive, or, in other words, partakers of the spirit of life; for, as I have shewn before, it is by the indwelling of the Spirit that all true believers live. All the blessings of the new covenant flow to us through Christ, as the channel of their communication. If believers are quickened, they are “quickened together with Christ;” if they are raised up, they are “raised up together” with him; if they are filled with the fulness of God, it is because they are the “members of his body,” “the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” In short, the spirit of life and holiness must be given to those who believe, as the consequence of the sentence of justification pronounced upon them, and in execution of the award of life, which forms an essentially component part of that sentence. I say in execution of that award; for we must not confound justification and regeneration. Though the latter be an inseparable consequence of the former, it is yet perfectly distinct from it. *Justification* is properly no more than a solemn adjudication of the believer’s title to eternal life; and this it is the office of the Father to pronounce; according to that saying of the Apostle, “It is *God* that justifieth;”* that is, as I understand his words, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; for it is his law we have violated; and consequently, it is he who must determine whether or not he is satisfied with the vicarious obedience and death

* Romans viii. 33.

of his Son. *Regeneration*, on the contrary, is the communication of life to those who were spiritually dead, in execution of that sentence by which God the righteous judge had awarded to them life, in consideration of his infinite delight in the righteousness of his Son. And this is properly the work of Christ. “For as the Father hath life in himself, *so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.*”* “As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, *even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.*”† As a title is simply a legal right to a possession, and is of no avail unless that right is reduced into possession; so justification, or a divinely adjudicated title to life, is no more than a right to its possession, and can be of no avail to us, unless it be subsequently followed up by the gift of life. If indeed we were already in possession of life, nothing further would be wanting to our complete salvation than a solemn adjudication of our right to it. If we only stood, like criminals at the bar of a human tribunal, charged with a capital offence, by which our lives became forfeited to divine justice, and we had not yet paid the forfeit; then indeed a simple acquittal would be all we needed. But this comparison does not strictly hold. Our life is not merely forfeited to divine justice, it has been in a measure paid; we are not merely liable to condemnation, we are condemned already;

* John v. 26.

† Ib. 21.

we are not merely awaiting the execution of the sentence of the law, that sentence has been in part already executed. In short, we are "dead in trespasses and sins." If no part of the sentence of death had been put in execution, then indeed a simple reversal of that sentence would perfect our deliverance; but such a reversal will little profit us, if that sentence has been, in a most material part of it, already executed. If our present condition were merely that of liability to death, a sentence of justification alone would restore us to the full enjoyment of life. But being already dead, not only must the sentence of condemnation formerly passed upon us be reversed, but the effects of that sentence. viz. spiritual death, must be counteracted and removed: otherwise justification would resemble, not the acquittal of a prisoner from a capital charge, to which it has been frequently compared, but the reversal of an attainder by an act of the legislature, after the death of the criminal. In short, without regeneration, justification will be to us of no avail. To enjoy the benefits which it is intended to secure to us, we must be "quickened together with Christ." Then indeed will it profit us, because then we shall be put into possession of that inheritance of life, to which the sentence of the great Judge has graciously restored us.

These sentiments receive striking confirmation

from what is said by St. Paul in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, to which I would strongly recommend the reader's attention. I must beg leave to observe, however, that by a mistranslation of one or two expressions in that chapter, on which the whole argument of the Apostle turns, the English reader is deprived of one of the strongest proofs which the New Testament affords of the necessity of personal and vital holiness. The error of our translators is in their using the *dative* instead of the *ablative* case in the second, tenth and eleventh verses. The rendering given by Dr. Macknight is greatly to be preferred. In the second verse he has rendered the words, ἀπεθανομεν τη αμαρτια, "we who have died by sin;" so in the tenth verse, τη αμαρτια απεθανεν εφαπαξ, "he died by sin once;" so again in the eleventh verse, νεκρος μεν ειναι τη αμαρτια he translates, "to be dead verily by sin." The obvious meaning of the Apostle is, that sin was the *cause* of death both to believers and to Christ; that it was that *by which* they died; and not that *to which* they had become dead. Indeed, with respect to Christ, it would be difficult to point out any sense in which he could, with any propriety, be said to have died *unto sin*. To suppose, with the author of a recent pamphlet, that the words of St. Paul, rendered by our translators, (as I conceive, very improperly,) "he died *unto sin* once," signify, "that when he died he had endured all the

penalty which sin—or rather, the law for sin—could righteously inflict, viz. death;” and therefore that “sin could not penally afflict him, or put him to death again,”—I quote the words of the author—appears to me to be putting a very forced construction on the Apostle’s words; a construction which the least reflection will, as I conceive, convince the reader they will by no means bear. The *Apostle* evidently alludes to the *actual death* of Christ upon the cross: but *this* interpretation affixes to the Apostle’s words a merely *figurative meaning*, and supposes them to intend *the legal consequences resulting from his death*. The Apostle speaks of an event which “once” took place, a condition *which has no longer any existence*, a state *to which the present glory of the Redeemer is opposed*. But *this* interpretation must consider him as speaking of a state of things which had its commencement indeed at the death of Christ, but which is to continue for ever, and, consequently, is perfectly consistent with Christ’s present state of glory. The death of which the sacred writer speaks ceased to have dominion over him when he arose from the dead; for he says himself, “knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him;” adding, according to the rendering of his words, which to me appears most correct, “for in that he died, he died once by sin; but in that he

liveth, he liveth by God." But that *legal consequence of his death*, which the writer, whose opinion I am now combating, seems to suppose is the idea intended to be expressed by the Apostle, is not properly an *event* which could be said to have happened once: on the contrary, it is the result of the death of Christ, the one event to which St. Paul alludes, and, instead of having no longer any existence, it is *a state or condition which will continue for ever*.

The reader will now perceive the real stress of the Apostle's argument. If Christ died *by sin*, and if believers by their baptism into Christ are baptized into his death, they must of necessity account themselves to have been virtually crucified with Christ, and, consequently, to have died by sin. If so, its dominion over them has ceased; since that nature is dead over which it formerly reigned. If Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God, and is now partaker of a life over which death hath no dominion; if the life he now enjoys arises from the immediate indwelling of the godhead in his risen humanity—intimated, as I conceive, by the expression, "in that he liveth, he liveth by God;"—and if the believer in Christ in baptism is emblematically made a partaker of Christ's resurrection; then it follows, that he ought to reckon himself a partaker of a divine life, or, to use the Apostle's own words, "alive by God through Jesus Christ."

And if so, his obligation to a holy life cannot be denied. To sin he owes nothing; since it has put him to death in the person of his Lord, and those members of sin are crucified by which alone he could serve it. To God he owes every thing; for by him he lives. It is precisely the same argument, only differently expressed, which St. Paul uses in the eighth chapter of the same Epistle to the Romans; “If Christ be in you, the body indeed is dead through sin (*δι’ αμαρτιαν*,) but the Spirit is life through righteousness (*δια δικαιοσυνην*.) But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”* In this passage the connection between justification by the righteousness of Christ, and a resurrection to spiritual life, is plainly indicated in those few, but striking words, “If Christ be in you,—*the Spirit is life through righteousness.*” Were there no other passage to confirm the doctrine I have advanced upon this subject, I should deem such a plain and unequivocal testimony as this amply sufficient.

* Romans viii. 10—14.

The reader will now, I trust, think I have fully redeemed the pledge I gave at the commencement of the preceding chapter, to prove that it is really dishonourable to the Saviour to imagine, that the work of our salvation was finished on the cross; that it is dishonourable to divine grace to suppose, that it reigns only in the forgiveness of sins. I cannot content myself, however, without making a practical application of the principles advanced in the present chapter: but having already trespassed too much on the patience of my reader, I shall reserve what I have to offer to him by way of improvement for a separate chapter.

CHAP. VIII.

ON THE SAME SUBJECT; BEING A PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES ADVANCED IN THE TWO PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

THE remarks submitted to the reader in the two preceding chapters, will, I trust, appear to him amply sufficient to establish a position very early advanced in the course of this discussion; viz. that justification by faith in Christ includes in it more than the forgiveness of sin, and a consequent exemption from the penalty of disobedience; that besides an *acquittal* from the charge of guilt, it comprehends also *a solemn adjudication of the believer's title to life.*

Two consequences follow from the doctrine of justification as thus explained: first, that eternal life is not the reward of our own personal obedience, but of the righteousness of Christ: and secondly, *that a renewal of the heart by the Spirit of Christ, is an inseparable concomitant of justification.* And this instructs us what place to assign to obedience in the economy of our salvation; viz. not to lay it as a foundation for our acceptance with God, or to offer it to divine justice as an

adequate price for our future and eternal glory; but to lay it on the golden altar as a free-will offering, as the grateful tribute of such as have already received mercy. This is the principle on which it is uniformly enforced by the sacred writers. “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God*,”* is the most usual strain of apostolic exhortation. The obedience they inculcate is not that of servants, who are urged to diligence in their work, that they may thereby entitle themselves to a reward; but of children, who, having been constituted heirs to a large inheritance, are called upon to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work;” while, at the same time, “they give thanks unto the Father, who hath made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”†

The necessity of obedience to our final salvation is not in the smallest degree diminished, because it is not made the *price* of our future blessedness. For though obedience will not constitute the ground or consideration of our acceptance at the final day, it certainly will constitute the rule or standard by which we shall then be tried. The question which will then have to be determined will be, whether we are the sheep of Christ or not. And though undoubtedly it is not by obeying his voice, that we *become* his sheep,

* Rom. xii. 1.

† Col. i. 10, 12.

yet it is on the other hand as certain, that we are not his sheep, if we do not obey it. "My sheep," says Christ, "*hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*"* And again, speaking of himself, he says, "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep *hear his voice*: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and *leadeth them out*. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and *the sheep follow him*: for they *know his voice.*"† Obedience to Christ, then, according to this figurative representation, is the discriminating characteristic of all his people. Independently of this, none have any right to conclude that they belong to that happy number. By this criterion we shall be judged at the last day: by this criterion, and by this alone, ought we now, therefore, to judge ourselves. For in vain is it that we approve ourselves, if Christ should finally condemn us. And that he will then condemn us, if we have never listened to his voice, and followed him, he has forewarned us in the plainest terms; "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophecied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many

* John x. 27.

† Ibid. 2—4.

wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

Though good works be not necessary to justify us before God, they are necessary to evince our justification: nor have we any title to consider ourselves as having been justified by faith in Christ, if we bring forth none of the fruits of justification. For, as has been already observed, justification comprehends, besides the forgiveness of sins, the award of spiritual life; and that award is invariably followed up by the gift of the Spirit.

It is worthy the reader's observation, that there is no part of the New Testament which treats either directly or indirectly of our justification by faith in Christ, in which allusion is not made to the Spirit of Christ as the seal of justification. It is in the Epistles of Saint Paul to the Romans and the Galatians, that we meet with the clearest statement and the most laboured defence of the doctrine of justification by faith without deeds of law. Now let the reader attentively examine the Apostle's argument in each of these Epistles, and he will not fail to remark, that, in both, the gift of the Spirit is represented as the infallible seal of justification. And on this principle the whole of his argument in the Epistle to the Romans in reply to the Antinomian inference,

* Matt. vii. 21—23.

“Let us sin, that grace may abound,” is constructed. But as that argument is very extended, running through the whole of the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters, I must forbear quotation. Indeed it is the less necessary, as I have already illustrated the Apostle’s train of reasoning considerably at length. In the Epistle to the Galatians similar statements are to be found expressed in nearly the same terms. In both these Epistles we are taught, that every true believer in Christ is quickened by the Spirit. In the one we find such sayings as these, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body indeed is dead through sin, but the Spirit is life through righteousness.”* And again; “If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died by sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth by God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed by sin, but alive by God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”† In the other we meet with corresponding expressions. Let the two following serve as examples; “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that *the blessing of Abraham* might come on the Gentiles

* Rom. viii. 9, 10.

† Rom. vi. 8—11.

through Jesus Christ: *that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*"* So again; "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under law, to redeem them that were under law, *that we might receive the adoption of sons.* And *because ye are sons,* God hath sent forth *the Spirit of his Son into your hearts,* crying, Abba, Father."†

Now, if none who are destitute of the Spirit of Christ have a title to consider themselves as his, we have only to inquire whether or not we have the Spirit of Christ, in order to ascertain whether we possess a justifying faith. And how can it be known whether the Spirit of Christ dwell in us, or not, except by those fruits of holiness which that Spirit produces in the hearts and lives of all those in whom it dwells. Such fruit it does invariably produce; for, according to our blessed Lord, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit," any more than "a corrupt tree can bring forth good fruit:"‡ so that every tree may infallibly be known by its fruit. If, therefore, the heart be renewed by the spirit of grace, the fruits of sanctification will not be wanting. It is as true, that "they that are after the Spirit, *do mind the things of the Spirit;*" as it is of those "who are after the flesh, that they mind the things of the flesh."§ So that if it were really our great object and aim to ascertain, whether we were

* Gal. iii. 13, 14. † Ibid. iv. 4—6. ‡ Matt. vii. 18. § Rom. viii. 5.

Christ's, or not; the point might speedily, and with certainty, be determined. For we have only to inquire, whether the things, about which we are intent, are the things of the flesh, or the things of the Spirit. And this question it is not difficult to answer, if we would but be true to ourselves. The only obstacle to our arriving at a just conclusion, is our readiness to be deceived. Though a matter of the highest importance that we should not mistake, yet we willingly mistake, our pride not suffering us to see our characters in their true colours. And yet, surely, it were infinitely better to discover the truth with respect to ourselves, however painful that discovery might be; than to continue under a flattering delusion, till eternity should reveal to us our error, when that error could no longer be rectified.

Let none imagine, they honour Christ by continuing in sin. On the contrary, to sin against his authority, is to trample him under their feet. It is an impious attempt to arrest him in his glorious progress from conquering to conquer. The work assigned him by the Father is that of subjugating all things to himself. "For to this end he both died, and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." Nor shall this glorious design fail in his hands. "To him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

* Rom. xiv. 11. compared with Phil. ii. 10, 11.

If this confession be not made to him now, by a prompt, cheerful, diligent and unwearied obedience to his will; it shall be made at the great day, when he shall come to execute vengeance on his enemies. Then, if not before, all shall acknowledge that he is “King of Kings and Lord of Lords;” but an acknowledgment extorted by the terrors of that day will prove of no avail.

Let it not, however, for one moment be thought, that the obedience which Christ exacts of the subjects of his kingdom, diminishes, in the slightest degree, the glory of his grace. I am anxious to remove this impression from the minds of any of my readers, who should have been so unhappy as to have entertained the thought. In the simplicity of their hearts they may have been induced to cherish it, wishing above all things to honour their Saviour, and fearful of mixing up any thing in the work of their salvation besides his meritorious righteousness. To such I would say, the best way to honour Christ, even as “the Lord your Righteousness,” is practically to obey his will. For it ought never to be forgotten, that the obedience which he rendered to the divine law, and by which he became “the Lord our Righteousness,” entitled him, on the terms of the covenant of works, to the reward of eternal life. But this reward he could not in any other way receive, than as the Head of his body the Church. Being himself the “Eternal Life,” he could in no

other way be rewarded, than by becoming the depositary of life for those whom he undertook to redeem. It is only therefore as life is imparted to his people, that his perfect obedience to the divine law receives any recompense. It is as they live, that he is rewarded. But that life which he is exalted to bestow, is, as we have already seen, the life of God; a life springing immediately from his residence in the soul. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth."* They who live, "live by the Spirit;"† he is the spring and fountain of their new and immortal being. But that Spirit cannot dwell in the soul without quickening it to a holy activity. The soul in whom he dwells will live for God. To imagine that we "live by the Spirit," while we do not "walk by the Spirit," is a gross delusion. Life can only be known by its activity. The principle of life itself is imperceptible; it is no object of any of our senses; its existence can only be ascertained by its vital operations. But, indiscernible as this principle itself is, nothing can be easier than to detect its presence. Unable as we are to say, what life is, we feel no hesitation, because we find no difficulty, in determining, where it is, and where it is not. The indications of its presence are too marked to be mistaken. A corpse can never deceive us. We see the image of death visibly enstamped upon it. And so it is with the spiritual

* John vi. 63.

† Gal. v. 25.

life. Its presence is indicated by its vital operations; and if these are not discernible, we have a title to say, here there is no spiritual life; this is the region of death.

Would we, then, exalt the Saviour in his character of "*the Lord our Righteousness*," we must live unto God. A holy life being the fruit of the Spirit dwelling in the heart; and the gift of that Spirit to those who are justified by faith being the purchase of the Redeemer's righteousness; it is plain, that a holy life is honourable to the Saviour. So far is it from detracting from his all-sufficient merit, that it is really the fruit, and the evidence of its all-sufficiency. That believers are quickened from a death in trespasses and sins, they owe as much to the meritorious righteousness of Christ, as they do their redemption from the curse of the law. By his obedience unto death, he acquired the right to impart life to the dead. In bestowing the Spirit of life upon his people whom he purchased by his blood, consists the exercise of that dominion, which the Father has conferred upon him as the reward of his obedience. In subduing the corruptions of their hearts, in bringing every thought of their minds into captivity to himself, he enjoys the recompense of all his labours and toils. It is when "the dead hear his voice and live," that "he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied." Nor, as it regards those whom he hath purchased to

himself by his blood, shall his most enlarged desires fail of being fully accomplished. For thus saith the word of prophecy; "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever *after the order of Melchisedec.*"* And how signally has this prophecy been fulfilled! What illustrious trophies of his victorious grace does the history of the Church of Christ record! Amongst them we behold a woman of Samaria once defiled by lust; a Zaccheus once stained with the guilt of extortion; a condemned malefactor, who once expiated on a cross a life of violence and fraud. On these the mighty Saviour "sprinkles clean water," according to the figurative language of Isaiah, "and they are clean." The impure becomes chaste, the extortioner beneficent, the dying thief a fit companion for the society of the just. Of Corinthian sinners, among whom St. Paul expressly names, "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous persons, drunkards, revilers, extortioners;" the Redeemer has caused it to be written, as a memorial of the might of his power to the latest generations, "Such were some

* Psalm cx. 2—4.

of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”*

But the most astonishing and instructive example, which the whole history of the Redeemer's triumphs can supply, is that which is furnished in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. This blood-thirsty persecutor was on his way to Damascus, with a commission of imprisonment and death against the disciples of Jesus. The voice of Christ reaches his ear, and the power of Christ touches his heart; and he cries out, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”† Was this the language of momentary alarm? No; his heart was softened and subdued. Love had touched and melted his soul. The object of his former hatred and scorn, is now the object of his supreme affection and delight. “The grace of our Lord,” says he, speaking of the mighty change then wrought in him by the power of Christ, “was exceeding abundant *with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*”‡ Having been “forgiven much; he “loved much.”§ His zeal for the glory of his Saviour after his conversion to the faith, was proportioned to the bitterness of his hatred, when formerly he had attempted to destroy it. As none had equalled him as “a persecutor, as a blasphemer,” as a cruel murderer of the saints;

* 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.

† Acts ix. 6.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 14.

§ See Luke vii. 47.

so none can compare with him in ardent and unwearied labours for Christ, or in tender pity and compassion for the souls of men, after he is called to the Apostleship. Here then let the christian reader behold a *pattern* of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ towards all his people. In the *measure of its exercise* it would be in vain to expect that it should always equal this glorious exemplar; but in its *mode of operation* it would be as absurd to imagine that it should ever vary. Wherever the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ abounds, *faith and love* will be in vigorous exercise.

Let, then, such as would appropriate to themselves the consolation, which is to be derived from an assurance of their being justified by faith, see that they abound in all the fruits of the Spirit. It is certainly true, that all who believe, are freely justified from all their offences; and that they receive a present title to eternal life. But then, it is equally true, that they who believe are quickened into life by the vivifying Spirit of Christ. If Christ died, he also arose from the dead; and if we are made partakers of his death, we are also made partakers of his resurrection. "If we be dead with Christ," says the Apostle, "we believe that we shall *also live with him*."* In short, we have no title to pronounce ourselves his disciples, unless we can say with the same

* Rom. vi. 8.

Apostle, "I am crucified with Christ, *nevertheless I live*, yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*. And *the life that I now live* in the flesh, *I live by the faith of the Son of God*, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

The remarks already made, will, I trust, fully satisfy the mind of every impartial reader, that the Covenant of Grace is distinguished from the Covenant of Works, not by the absence of a rule of life, as some have impiously affirmed; but by the glorious provision it has made for effectually securing our obedience to it. "The *form*" only "of knowledge and of truth," to employ the expressive language of St. Paul, was to be found in the law of Moses. For the reality, or "truth" itself, we must look into the kingdom of grace, administered by the risen and ascended Saviour. For it is his prerogative to reign in the hearts of his people. There he erects his throne, there he sways his righteous sceptre. "The kingdom of God," said he to his hearers, "is within you."† Happy for us if this kingdom has been set up in our hearts! There we must find it, or for us it will be in vain that Christ and his Apostles proclaimed, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Into this kingdom none can enter but they who are born of the Spirit. For "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."‡ Nay, he cannot

* Gal. ii. 20.

† Luke xvii. 21.

‡ John iii. 5.

even so much as discern it. The principle of administration in this heavenly kingdom bears no analogy to that, by which all other kingdoms are administered. To controul the corrupt propensities of men, they employ coercive means; content to restrain the outward indulgence of passions which they cannot extirpate from the human breast. This heavenly kingdom, on the contrary, is administered by the constant, unintermitting agency of a power, which, operating directly on the heart, subdues and exterminates every corrupt and depraved affection, and sweetly and effectually inclines the happy subjects of it to render a prompt and cheerful obedience to the will of God. None are so truly happy as they who serve Christ. That he reigns, and that he will continue to reign, till he hath subdued all things to himself, is to the servant of Christ matter of unspeakable joy. Sensible, deeply sensible of the evil of sin, of the impurity of his own heart, of his sad, and, as it regarded himself, his hopeless captivity to sin and death; knowing too, that in conformity to the will of God, a sense of his love, a freedom of access into his presence, and a future vision of his unclouded glory, consists the highest felicity of an intelligent, sentient, and immortal mind; he hails "the glad tidings concerning God's kingdom" established and administered by his only begotten Son, with more joy, than ever gladdened the heart of the slave,

the debtor, or the condemned criminal, when the trump of jubilee announced the long-looked-for year of release. The bitter lamentation which he once often repeated, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” he now exchanges for the language of an assured confidence of speedy and complete deliverance; “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

And yet, of all this rich and inexhaustible source of felicity, Antinomianism attempts to despoil the Christian believer; while, at the same time, it would rob the Saviour of the glory of working out so great salvation for his people: and all this under the cloak of zeal for the honour of Christ, and of love to the souls of men. O when shall the folly, impiety, and malignity of a doctrine, which at once dishonours Christ, and destroys the souls of such as cordially and practically embrace it, be made manifest to all men! Should these pages, in the economy of means, be instrumental in accelerating an event so propitious to the cause of pure and undefiled religion, the writer will esteem himself amply recompensed.

* Rom. vii. 24, 25.

CHAP. IX.

OF THE THIRD PECULIARITY OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE; VIZ. THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS COMMITTED BY BELIEVERS POSTERIOR TO THEIR JUSTIFICATION.

THIS peculiarity of the covenant of grace necessarily results from the character of the gospel dispensation as “the kingdom” or “reign of God.” And it will be recollected that it constituted a principal feature in the second covenant made with the people of Israel after their redemption from “the house of bondage.” The first, or Sinaitic covenant, made no provision for the forgiveness of sins. To the transgressor of its law it was inexorable. It was as preparatory to the second covenant that God proclaimed his name, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.”* And this proclamation must be considered as defining the nature of that more gracious dispensation which was then about to be established.

It might seem almost unnecessary to remark,

* Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7.

that the forgiveness promised to the people of Israel under the second, or renewed Abrahamic covenant, related not merely to the sin they had already committed in worshipping the golden calf, by which they had incurred the penalty of the law of the first covenant,—for that had been already graciously remitted,—but rather to those sins which they might afterwards commit in violation of the law of the second covenant. I should have forborne making this remark, as deeming it unnecessary, had it not been essential to the explanation of the doctrine now under consideration. For it ought to be remembered, that the second, or renewed Abrahamic covenant, stands not, like that of Mount Sinai, in opposition to the covenant of grace introduced and established by the Messiah. On the contrary, it served, prior to his coming, as a type, outline, or figure of that dispensation of mercy. Instead therefore, of looking, as some have done, into the Christian dispensation, for a contrast to every peculiarity of Judaism; we ought rather to look for the closest resemblance in it to every distinguishing feature of that shadowy economy; remembering only, that the resemblance it ought to present, should be that which the substance bears to the shadow.

The mediatorial kingdom established by Jehovah over his ancient people, subsequently to the breach of the Sinaitic covenant, was a type

or pattern of the kingdom afterwards to be erected by the Messiah; and the principles of its administration were illustrative of those by which Messiah's kingdom was to be regulated. This is the only key which will open to us "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." And I scruple not to say, that it has been from a misapprehension of the nature and design of the Jewish theocracy, that the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven have been so little understood. The covenant of Mount Sinai having been confounded with the covenant afterwards made with the people of Israel on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant, the Jewish theocracy has been considered as furnishing a contrast to the future kingdom of the Messiah, rather than a type or model of it; and, consequently, dissimilitudes have been sought after, instead of resemblances. But this principle of interpretation ought to have been reversed. The analogy between the Mosaic and Christian economies would have been found to supply a far better canon of scriptural exposition: nor will the dispensation of grace ever be clearly understood, till this canon is more generally adopted.

In the last three chapters, I illustrated one of those analogies to which I now allude. The present chapter will be devoted to the illustration of another of those analogies, as exhibited in the forgiveness of sins. I speak not now of sins committed by believers prior to their justification,

but of sins committed subsequently to it; not of sins committed in violation of the law of the covenant of works, but of sins committed in violation of the authority and will of Christ as the king of his redeemed people. For it is not till a sinner is justified by faith from the guilt of his past sins, that he assumes the honourable character of a "servant of Christ." He must be "purged from dead works," before he can "serve the living God." This is the order which divine wisdom has established; and it accords with the purity and justice of God that this order should be inviolably observed. But if the pardon of sins committed by the believer while under a covenant of works precede his admission into the kingdom of Christ, it cannot be in their forgiveness that we are to look for *that* analogy, which I am now endeavouring to elucidate. For, as I have already observed, the forgiveness of sins promised to the Israelites on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant, renewed with them after the breach of the Sinaitic covenant, extended not merely to that single offence by which they had incurred the penalty of the law of the first covenant, but to future offences which they might afterwards commit in violation of the law of the second, or renewed Abrahamic covenant. This covenant too had its law; and that law, as well as the law delivered from Mount Sinai, had its sanctions; and those of a very awful kind. But yet, notwithstanding

this, it was a covenant of grace; since, under it sin was not inexorably punished, as it had been by the law of the covenant of works, but graciously forgiven to such as truly repented and returned to God.

We are not to suppose, that the threatenings denounced against impenitent transgressors of the Mosaic law, and which are recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, belong to the covenant of works. By no means. We have the authority of Moses himself for saying, that they appertain to another covenant—a covenant of grace. In a former part of this work, I have pointed out the distinction between the two covenants of law and grace successively made by Jehovah with his people Israel; and have shewn, that Moses himself very carefully marks that distinction. Speaking in reference to the Sinaitic covenant, he observes, to prevent the Israelites from confounding it with the Abrahamic covenant; “The Lord our God *made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.*”^{*} According to this declaration of Moses, the covenant made in Horeb was utterly unknown to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; in other words, it was totally dissimilar in its spirit and principle to that covenant which God had so frequently renewed with the Jewish patriarchs. Wherein

^{*} Deut. v. 3.

that dissimilarity consisted we have already seen, and the reader will recollect, that one important feature of distinction was this, that while the covenant of Mount Sinai spoke nothing of forgiveness, the Abrahamic covenant made express provision for its exercise. Under this renewed covenant of grace, it was one of the acknowledged attributes of Jehovah to forgive; “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy;” * is the exclamation of one who lived under this shadowy dispensation of grace. But on what basis was his confidence in the divine mercy founded? on the covenant of Mount Sinai, or on the covenant made with Abraham? The prophet himself answers this important question for us: “He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou shalt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. *Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.*” †

But while the covenant made with Abraham, and renewed with his posterity in the land of Moab, contained gracious promises of forgiveness, those promises were not made indiscriminately to all; they were restricted to the penitent, and

* Micah vii. 18.

† Ibid. 19, 20.

always presupposed a hearty return to God from the path of disobedience. Of this abundant proof is furnished in the writings of Moses. Thus, the very first proclamation of divine mercy concludes with a distinct avowal of God's fixed determination not to absolve the obstinate and impenitent transgressor. Does he proclaim his name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin?" it is added, to prevent the abuse of this revelation of the divine mercy to the purposes of licentiousness; "and that *will by no means clear the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."* Here is as much mercy exhibited as the real penitent can ask for, or desire; but yet so exhibited, as to deter him from a wilful and presumptuous transgression of the divine will; "He will by no means clear the guilty." And a similar limitation is afterwards drawn by Moses; "Know therefore," says he to the children of Israel, when recapitulating the law in the land of Moab, "that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations; and *repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them:*

* Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7.

he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face."* And it is in perfect accordance with the principle and spirit of this limitation, that the Prophet Isaiah thus encourages the wicked in his day to repent and return to God; "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."† Here mercy is promised to the wicked, but it is on condition of his forsaking his evil way, and returning to the Lord his God.

It is false, as I hinted before, to imagine, that, under the covenant of grace renewed with the posterity of Abraham, no curses are denounced against presumptuous transgressors. The book of Deuteronomy abounds with the most awful denunciations. And that those denunciations belong strictly to the renewed Abrahamic, and not to the Sinaitic covenant, we have the authority of Moses for asserting. After warning the people of Israel, in the most solemn and awful manner, of the terrible judgments which would be inflicted upon them, if they hearkened not to the voice of the Lord their God to observe to do all his commandments and statutes, "which," says Moses, "I command thee *this day*;"‡ he subjoins this very important remark; "*These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to*

* Deut. vii. 9, 10. † Isaiah lv. 7. ‡ See Deut. xxviii. 15—68.

make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb."* But for this observation we should probably have thought, that these awful denunciations against presumptuous transgressors belonged to the Sinaitic covenant; and, consequently, could have drawn no conclusion from hence as to the real character of a covenant of grace. But, appended as these denunciations are to the Abrahamic, and not to the Sinaitic covenant, we learn in what the real distinction between a covenant of law and a covenant of grace consists; and that denunciations against presumptuous and impenitent transgressors are not at all incompatible with promises of mercy and forgiveness to the contrite and obedient.

Now there is, as the reader will observe, a strict analogy between the second covenant made with the people of Israel, and the covenant of grace confirmed with Christ and his people. Under the gospel dispensation forgiveness is promised; but that promise, as we shall soon have occasion to observe, has its restrictions and limitations. Every offence committed against the authority of Christ as the Lord of his people is not comprehended within the compass of it. Some sins are expressly, and by name, excluded. A line is drawn, beyond which apostacy becomes final, irrecoverable, hopeless. To some no mercy

* Deut. xxix. 1.

is exhibited ; on the contrary, they are abandoned to the terrors of a guilty conscience, and the fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.* And it becomes every one who professes the christian name to beware, lest he thus apostatize to his eternal ruin.

That it is possible for a true believer so to sin against Christ, as to stand in need of forgiveness, even after he has been justified by faith, is a position which one could scarcely think any would have been hardy enough to deny, confirmed as it is by every page of divine revelation. To maintain the negative would involve us in a thousand absurdities and contradictions. If it be impossible that believers should ever, in strictness of speech, require to be forgiven after they have been justified by faith in Christ, one of these three hypotheses must be adopted ; either first, that by justification believers attain to a state of sinless perfection, from which it is impossible they can ever afterwards fall ; or, secondly, that believers are under no law or rule of duty, and cannot therefore incur the guilt of transgression ; or, thirdly, that, supposing such a law to exist, the guilt of all sins, future as well as past, was entirely removed by the sentence of justification passed upon them when first they believed in Christ for salvation. Each of these positions has found its advocates ; and it is really difficult to say which of them is

* See Heb. vi. 4—6 ; x. 26—29 ; xii. 17. 2 Pet. ii. 1—21. Jude 4—13.

clogged with the greatest absurdities. But yet, he who denies, that a believer can ever stand in need of forgiveness subsequently to his justification by faith, must make his election which of these positions he will choose to defend.

The first of these positions stands in direct contradiction to the testimony of Solomon, who affirms, "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not;"* and of St. John, who assures us, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."† We are authorized, therefore, in asserting, not only that sinless perfection is not the inseparable concomitant of justification, and, therefore, the universal privilege of true believers; but that it is not so much as attainable by any in the present life.

That sanctification is progressive, and not, as the sentiment I am now combating supposes, instantaneously perfected in all who believe; that sin is not completely subdued, though its former empire over the heart is subverted; that the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; that the law in the members warreth against the law of the mind, so that when the saints of God would do good, evil is present with them, and they cannot do the things that they would; are facts confirmed, not only by the most decisive testimonies of scripture,‡ but by the daily experience of all good

* Eccl. vii. 20. † 1 John i. 8. ‡ See Rom. vii. 19, 21, 23. Gal. v. 17.

men. And he who knows nothing of the strength of inbred corruption has reason to fear, that his ignorance arises, rather from the unresisted dominion which sin still continues to exercise over him, than from the triumphant victory which he has gained over it. “Let not him that girdeth on his harness, boast himself, as he that putteth it off,”* was the answer, which Ahab, king of Israel, returned to the taunting message of Benhadad, king of Syria: and the event justified the rebuke. And it is the apostolic caution to every self-confident believer, “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”†

Watchfulness against temptation, godly jealousy over ourselves, an habitual fear lest we should fail of the grace of God;—these are the dispositions inculcated by Christ and his Apostles. “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;”‡—“What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch;”§—“Be not high-minded, but fear;”||—“Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it;”¶—these are the exhortations they are continually sounding in our ears. But on the supposition that believers attain by their justification a state of sinless perfection, from which they can never afterwards fall, these admonitions have no meaning. And

* 1 Kings xx. 11.

† 1 Cor. x. 12.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 41.

§ Mark xiii. 37.

|| Rom. xi. 20.

¶ Heb. iv. 1.

hence we find, that such as have adopted the notion of sinless perfection, scruple not to discard all such admonitory language as unsuitable to the state and condition of the people of God.

That believers are under no law, by the transgression of which they can ever stand in need of divine forgiveness, is another hypothesis invented to get rid of the doctrine of forgiveness as extended to our daily offences. We have already so fully exposed the absurdity of this sentiment, that it would be trespassing on the reader's patience, were I to labour the point a second time. And with respect to the third hypothesis, which, while it professes to admit the existence of such a rule, affirms that believers cannot, in strictness of speech, stand in need of daily forgiveness, inasmuch as the guilt of all sins, future as well as past, is removed by the sentence of justification passed upon them when first they believe in Christ for salvation; I have also so completely demonstrated the falsehood and dangerous tendency of this doctrine, when treating of that branch of justification which relates to the forgiveness of sins, that I shall not at present repeat what I there advanced, but shall content myself with simply referring the reader to it, should he have forgotten the course of argument which I there adopted. What I would wish to offer to the reader's consideration in the present stage of this discussion, is rather a solution of the difficulty

which the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins committed by believers subsequently to their justification is supposed to involve. The difficulty is this, that such a doctrine cannot be maintained, without supposing that every sin so committed has the effect of cancelling their previous state of justification. It is this difficulty which has, I doubt not, led many great and good men, to advocate one or other of the three several hypotheses above adverted to. But the difficulty is far less than is apprehended. It arises wholly from a mistaken conception of the nature and grounds of justification. Because justification includes in it, when exercised towards sinners, the pardon of sin; it is inferred that the pardon of sin must necessarily involve in it justification; and, consequently, that to suppose a believer ever to need forgiveness, is to suppose he stands in need of being again justified.

This is the real source of the difficulty which is thought to be involved in the doctrine I am now endeavouring to support. And were it true that justification and forgiveness of sins were co-extensive, it would not be easy to remove the difficulty. But it is not true. Though justification necessarily includes in it forgiveness of sins; yet forgiveness of sins does not necessarily include in it justification. And the reason is plain. *Justification* is that peculiar modification of the act of forgiveness, which the nature of the dispensa-

tion under which man was originally placed, rendered indispensably necessary in order to maintain the honour of the law, and to illustrate the perfections of God. The law made no provision for the exercise of forgiveness. It proceeded on a principle of strict and impartial justice: and the only way by which it was possible to escape its penalty, was by fully satisfying its requisitions. It was not merely obstinate disobedience, and final impenitence, which incurred the penalty of death denounced by it. One offence was amply sufficient to expose the transgressor of it to its righteous curse. And, having once incurred its penalty, man could never have been forgiven, but through the gracious medium which infinite wisdom has devised; by which, while the sinner himself escapes the payment of the awful penalty, the penalty itself is fully paid. The law therefore acquits the sinner in consideration of the perfect satisfaction it has already received; that is, he is pardoned *in a way of justification*.

Now, if the law of Christ were equally strict with the law of the covenant of works; that is, *if it denounced a curse on every offence*, of whatever magnitude, or of whatever degree of enormity, making no distinction between sins of ignorance, sins of infirmity, or sins committed through the force of sudden and violent temptation, and presumptuous sins; then would the commission of any sin, however small its amount, however

deeply and sincerely deplored, and however carefully avoided for the future, expose the believer to a fresh sentence of condemnation; and, consequently, have the effect to cancel his previous state of justification. But is this the case? Is it the effect of every sin committed against the law of Christ to incur so tremendous a penalty? On the contrary, is not forgiveness expressly promised to the penitent believer on his return to his heavenly Father? Is it not declared in prophecy, in reference to the people over whom Messiah reigns, “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; *then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail?*”* And is it not written by the beloved disciple for the comfort of the penitent and contrite in all succeeding ages, “If we confess our sins, *he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness?*”†

It is from confounding together two modes of government utterly unlike in their principle, I mean regal and paternal government, that the difficulty I am endeavouring to remove arises. The distinction between them is very obvious. The former is administered on principles of rigid justice; and

* Psalm lxxxix. 30—33.

† 1 John i. 9.

when its authority is infringed, it punishes the guilty offender to the full extent of the threatened penalty, even should that penalty be *death*. The invariable consequence of violating the law by which it is administered is *condemnation*. But under the paternal government, condemnation is not the uniform and invariable consequence of transgressing the bounds of duty. A child *may* indeed by obstinately persisting in his disobedience to parental authority, at length provoke a sentence of perpetual exclusion from his father's house. But this is not the effect of *one* offence. *Many* must have been the provocations which a father must have received, before he can cease to yearn over a rebellious child. Unless he give proof of hardened impenitence, he will not consent for ever to cut him off. He will chastise him for his faults; but he will not abandon him, till chastisement proves utterly unavailing. And it is precisely thus that God deals with his own children. They offend him by the violation of his commands; he chastises them to bring them to repentance: and if few stripes will not avail, he inflicts more, till he makes them sensible of their folly, and they return to him with penitent and contrite hearts. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye

be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons.”*

While it is true, therefore, that believers do frequently incur the divine displeasure, it is not true, that a forfeiture of a previous state of justification is the consequence of every sin they commit: for it is not the character of the law under which they are placed to denounce death as the penalty of every offence. Every transgression does not incur a liability to final condemnation, from which they can only be restored by a fresh act of justification. And it has been wholly from overlooking this very obvious fact, that the possibility of a believer's standing in need of forgiveness, subsequently to his justification, has been denied. Let it be kept in mind, that every transgression committed against the authority of Christ does not incur the penalty of excision, and the difficulty which has been supposed to attend the doctrine I am labouring to establish, vanishes away.

“That believers are expressly commanded to pray for the forgiveness of sin, and that this command has been frequently exemplified in the conduct of the most eminent saints, whose names are recorded in the holy scriptures,” is even admitted by those, who contend, that believers can never, in strictness of speech, stand in need of forgiveness subsequently to their justification.

* Heb. xii. 6—8.

And, surely, these facts present a far greater difficulty than the one I have just been solving. That Jesus Christ should himself have taught his disciples to pray, "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;"* that the most eminent saints, such as David, and others, should have sought forgiveness, even after they had been justified by faith; that St. John should have laid it down as a universal principle, applicable to the people of God in all ages, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;"†—these are facts which no sophistry can reconcile with the doctrine which maintains, that believers never stand in need of forgiveness. It is true, attempts have been made to remove this difficulty by the advocates of that doctrine; but how miserably those attempts have succeeded, the reader will judge from the quotation subjoined in the margin.‡ It is taken from the writings of a celebrated divine of the last century, and is adduced by another late eminent writer as the

* Matt. vi. 12.

† 1 John i. 9.

‡ "Very frequently when the saints pray, either for the forgiveness of their own, or others' sins, their meaning is, that God would in a providential way, *deliver* them out of present distress; *remove* his afflicting hand, which lies heavy upon them; or *avert* those judgments which seem to hang over their heads, and very much threaten them; which, when he does, is an indication of his having pardoned them. We are to understand many petitions of *Moses*, *Job*, *Solomon*, and others, in this sense. Besides, when believers now pray for the pardon of sin, their meaning is—that they might

best solution of the difficulty which he could offer to his readers. I forbear adding their names out of tenderness to their memories. They were both great and holy men, and deserve the high estimation in which they have been long held by the church of Christ; but still they were equally liable to be mistaken with other men; and I feel no doubt the author of the passage quoted in the margin was himself imposed upon by the mysterious air which his solution assumed. He thought, doubtless, that his language implied something different from a direct and positive denial of the duty of believers to pray for the forgiveness of their daily offences; in short, that he had hit upon some happy expedient of explaining the injunction to pray for forgiveness of sin, and the example of saints in former ages illustrative of the nature and obligation of that duty, without either admitting on the one hand, that believers could ever, in strictness of speech, stand in need of forgiveness, or on the other hand flatly, and in terms denying it. But there is really no other alternative than to affirm or to

have the *sense*, the *manifestation* and *application* of pardoning grace to their souls. We are not to imagine, that as often as the saints sin, repent, confess their sins, and pray for the forgiveness of them, God passes new acts of pardon.—But, whereas they daily sin against God, grieve his Spirit, and wound their own consciences, they have need of the fresh sprinklings of the blood of Jesus, and of renewed manifestations of pardon to their souls; and it is both their duty and their interest to attend the throne of grace on this account.”

deny. To adopt a middle course is only to delude ourselves.

Let it be remembered, however, that the forgiveness we are commanded daily to pray for, is that which a father exercises towards his offending children; not that which a sovereign extends to guilty and condemned criminals. Nor is it true that when the saints pray for the forgiveness of their own, or others' sins, their meaning is, "that God would in a providential way deliver them out of present distress; remove his afflicting hand, which lies heavy upon them; or avert those judgments which hang over their heads, and very much threaten them;" this is not the burden of their request. No;—this were to impute to them the base feelings of a slave, who cares for nothing but the lash; and is happy when he is assured that his punishment is remitted. That which inflicts the deepest wound in the contrite heart, is the sense of having incurred God's fatherly displeasure, of having lost the wonted tokens of his love. It is the presence of God, the light of his countenance, and the joys of his salvation, for which he so importunately supplicates; and though no temporal judgments may follow his sins, he cannot rest, till these forfeited privileges are restored to him. After David had sinned against God in the matter of Uriah, he was not satisfied with the assurance of the Prophet Nathan, "The Lord hath put away thy sin; *thou shalt*

not die."* This only causes him to shed fresh tears of bitterness, and in the anguish of his spirit he cries out, "*Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.—Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.*"†

The reader must not forget, that the prayer in which our blessed Lord taught his disciples to pray, "forgive us our debts," is prefaced with the language of a child addressing his father, "*Our Father, which art in heaven.*" There is nothing, therefore, of the *servile* spirit blended with the petition; nor need the believer fear to adopt it as his own, lest he should seem to imply a forgetfulness of his filial relation to God, or a renunciation of the privileges of adoption. It is one of those very privileges which pertain to him in his character of a child of God. It is a blessing covenanted to him in the gospel; nor, if sought for in the spirit of lowly penitence, and of humble reliance on the atoning blood of Christ, will he seek for it in vain. It is recorded in that book which contains the charter of our salvation; "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."‡

But while the gospel proclaims forgiveness to the humble, the lowly, the returning penitent,

* 2 Sam. xii. 13.

† Psalm li. 9, 11, 12.

‡ 1 John i. 9.

let it not be thought, that it holds out the hope of forgiveness alike to all. While it says, for the encouragement of the true and sincere believer, who, through ignorance, infirmity, or violent temptation, may fall into sin, “there is a sin *not unto death*,” and for the forgiveness of which we are commanded to intercede one for another; it also says, to prevent presumption, and to guard us against apostacy from the faith, “there is a sin *unto death*, *I say not that ye shall pray for it.*”*

It must not be expected, however, that we should be able accurately to define the nature or amount of those sins which shall never be forgiven. The sacred scriptures have purposely, as it appears to me, left this subject involved in a degree of awful obscurity, lest, by too accurately drawing the line, they should afford encouragement to men to transgress up to the prescribed limit. That there is, however, such a limit, beyond which if a man transgress, he becomes involved in irreparable ruin, appears certain; and it is a truth which the sacred scriptures are continually pressing on our notice, that we may be upon our guard against final and hopeless apostacy. For, let it be remembered, a believer’s security for eternal salvation rests not on his having been justified from the guilt of his past sins, but on his being kept by divine grace faithful

* 1 John v. 16, 17.

and obedient unto the end. This, and this only, is the ground of his security against final perdition. Therefore St. Paul thus argues in his Epistle to the Romans, “If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, *much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*”* It is not a previous state of reconciliation, which affords us any security, *except as it is inseparably connected with the renewal and sanctification of the heart.*

For, it must be remembered, there is a day of scrutiny appointed, when “*all shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ,*”† and then “*every one shall be judged according to their works.*”‡ And “the fire” of that day “shall try *every man’s work* of what sort it is.”§ The question which that day will have to determine, in regard to all who have lived under the sound of the gospel, will be, whether they have obeyed Christ or not. And it is this which now renders the gift of the Spirit of Christ of such unspeakable value. For, destitute of the Spirit, we cannot perform an acceptable obedience; and yet, unless we obey Christ, we cannot be finally saved. The word of God abounds with the most awful denunciations against such as are disobedient to the will of Christ. “Those mine enemies,” said the blessed Redeemer, discoursing of the judgment-day, “*who would not that I should reign over*

* Rom. v. 10. † Ib. xiv. 10. ‡ Rev. xx. 13. § 1 Cor. iii. 13.

*them, bring hither and slay them before me.** Nor will it be enough to exempt us from this awful sentence, that we have professed faith in his mission, or trust in his sacrifice, or have called him, Lord, Lord. “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, *and do not the things which I say?*”†—“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; *but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophecied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, *I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*”‡

* Luke xix. 27.

† Ib. vi. 46.

‡ Matt. vii. 21—23.

CHAP. X.

ON THE REAL GROUNDS OF A BELIEVER'S SECURITY FOR
FINAL SALVATION.

As there are no speculative errors of a religious nature perfectly innoxious in their practical influence, so it may with truth be asserted, there are none so fatally pernicious as those which regard the grounds of our security for eternal salvation. And as such errors are very common, perhaps the writer cannot confer a more extensive or lasting benefit upon many of his readers, than by endeavouring if possible to rectify them.

The believer's security that he shall not fall into condemnation has been by some supposed to arise, either, on the one hand, from the want of a law, under the present gracious dispensation, enforced by so tremendous a sanction as that of eternal death; or, on the other hand, from some special exemption which every believer in Christ has obtained from the operation of that law. But neither of these suppositions are true. Nor indeed is it in the smallest degree necessary that we should adopt either of them, in order to establish

the consolatory, and certainly scriptural truth, that Christ's sheep shall never perish. No; were it possible that one who had been really justified by faith in Christ from the guilt of his past sins, could afterwards live in wilful disobedience to Christ, and die in a state of confirmed impenitence;—a case which scripture does not permit us to think can ever possibly occur;—still granting it possible, he would certainly perish, nor would his previous state of justification in the least degree avail him. Not that his perdition would be the consequence of a reversal of the sentence of justification formerly passed in his favour. No, this would infer that no law was enforced by the sanction of eternal death but the law of the covenant of works: for if we suppose the contrary, namely, that the law of Christ is enforced by such a sanction, we have no occasion to have recourse to the nature and operation of the covenant of works to account for a sentence of perdition.

It has, I believe, been too generally assumed, that no law can condemn a sinner, but the law of the covenant of works; and, consequently, that, as all true believers are not under a covenant of works, but a covenant of grace, they are in no danger of final perdition, be their conduct what it may. But it is far from being true, that the law of Christ's kingdom is incapable of punishing the transgressor of it with death. On the contrary,

that law will constitute the rule of judgment at the great and final day; "*The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*"* Nor can any one have read the New Testament with attention, without perceiving, that the principle which is to determine the eternal destinies of such as have lived under the gospel dispensation, is obedience or disobedience to Christ, and not obedience or disobedience to the law of the covenant of works. "Those mine enemies, *who would not that I should reign over them*, bring hither and slay them before me."†

This principle of future judgment is recognized by all the parables of our blessed Lord which refer to that great and awful day. And throughout the whole of the apostolic writings the same doctrine is invariably taught. It is never once asserted, that disobedience to the authority of Moses will expose the transgressor to eternal condemnation. On the contrary, this tremendous punishment is uniformly represented *as the consequence of disobedience to the authority and will of Christ*. Thus, St. Paul declares, that when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, he will "take vengeance on them that know not God, and that *obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory

* John xii. 47.

† Luke xix. 27.

of his power."* And in his Epistle to the Hebrews the same Apostle thus writes, "Therefore;" that is, on account of the pre-eminent dignity of Christ, by whom God hath in these last times spoken unto us, in comparison of angels, the ministers of his will under the Mosaic dispensation, "therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape *who neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken to us by the Lord?*"† And, in a subsequent chapter of the same epistle, he thus writes; "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: *of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?* For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, *The Lord shall*

* 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. † Heb. ii. 1—3.

judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

I have already remarked, that the denunciations which Moses was commanded by Jehovah to make against obstinate and impenitent transgressors, when, in the land of Moab, he renewed God's gracious covenant with the children of Israel, pertained not to the Sinaitic, but to the renewed Abrahamic covenant. I may now remark, that the denunciations of future wrath to be found in the New Testament belong, in like manner, not to the covenant of works, which, with respect to believers in Christ is superseded and annulled, but to the covenant of grace made with them in Christ their Saviour, and ratified and confirmed with his precious blood. For, let it be remembered, the sanctions by which the Mosaic law was enforced were all of a *temporal* nature. *Eternal death* was not a punishment denounced against transgressors by the law of Moses. So that when Christ and his Apostles speak of eternal death, they speak of a punishment unknown to the law. The abolition of that shadowy economy could not, therefore, affect a sanction, which the law of Moses did not so much as adopt.

I wish the reader particularly to attend to this important fact, as it furnishes an unanswerable objection to the doctrine of those who maintain, that such as are under a covenant of grace can

* Heb. x. 26—31.

never incur any obligation to punishment, *be their conduct what it may*. To this we reply, that the covenant of grace is itself guarded by the most tremendous of all sanctions; and that the curses denounced by Jehovah against his people Israel, should they rebel against his righteous authority, were but faint types of that fiery wrath, which awaits the impenitent transgressor of the authority and will of Christ.

The Apostles of Christ are supposed by some to borrow their doctrine of eternal retribution from the Mosaic law. But that they did not is plain from this, that the thing itself was impossible, since the doctrine of a future retribution is never once directly inculcated throughout the entire writings of the Jewish lawgiver. It is a fact not to be denied, that Moses enforces his law by *temporal* sanctions, and by *such only*. So silent is he as to the future and eternal destinies of men, that it may be affirmed with truth, that the whole of the Pentateuch does not contain one direct assertion of the *existence* even of a future state; much less does it appeal to a future judgment and eternal death, in order to enforce an obedience to its authority. These doctrines may, it is admitted, be gathered from some obscure hints scattered throughout those writings; but they are dark and mysterious intimations. And this accounts for the fact, that the sadducees, though they received the writings of Moses as of divine authority, yet

denied a future state. That they might have *inferred* a future state of existence from several allusive passages, is true, as appears from our Lord's reply to the sadducean objection;* but the very instance to which he refers them, as it may be supposed to be one of the most conclusive on the point in dispute, is confirmatory of the assertion, that a future retribution is not once appealed to by the Jewish lawgiver as the proper sanction of his law.

It is very remarkable, that the prophecy of Enoch concerning the future judgment, recorded by St. Jude,† is not so much as alluded to by Moses; and even his translation is described by him in ambiguous terms;‡ though certainly, had Moses designed to inculcate the doctrine of a future retribution, no reason can be assigned to account for his mysterious silence.

The solution of the difficulty must be sought for in the temporary nature of the Jewish economy. "It was a figure for the time then present;"§ and being intended to be abolished, it was necessary, that nothing should be admitted into its structure, but what was itself temporary and typical. If the day of judgment had really constituted an essential part of the Mosaic institution, then, indeed, the abolition of that institution would seem to imply, that the sanction of a future judg-

* See Matt. xxii. 29—32.

† See Jude 14, 15.

‡ See Gen. v. 24.

§ Heb. ix. 9.

ment was repealed, at least in relation to true believers. But as this sanction did not constitute a part of that shadowy economy, it cannot be in the smallest degree affected by its abrogation. On the contrary, the repeal of that shadowy law gives greater prominence to the doctrine of a future judgment: the system of temporal sanctions being withdrawn, the future and eternal destinies of men are left to occupy the whole field of moral vision. And hence arises, in part, the great power of the gospel in converting a sinner from the error of his way. Of the gospel message, the revelation of a day of judgment forms an essential part. It is the great and powerful sanction of that law by which the Redeemer's kingdom is administered. This is the grand motive by which the Apostles of Christ stir up sinners to repentance. "The times of this ignorance," says St. Paul to the Athenians, "God winked at, *but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*"* This is the persuasive argument by which they stimulate the faithful to watchfulness, to patient endurance, to unshaken constancy, to holy circumspection, and to active and unwearied labours in the service of Christ. "We

* Acts xvii. 30, 31.

must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ;”*—“Behold, the Judge standeth before the door;”†—“The Lord shall judge his people;”‡—is the plain and decisive language in which that argument is expressed.

It is worthy of remark, that while in the earlier portions of the Jewish scriptures, the allusions to a future retribution are very few, and those few mysterious and enigmatical, the later portions contain very frequent and very plain references to that event. Whether there are any to be found in the inspired writings composed anterior to the time of David is doubtful; but subsequently to that period, they grow thick upon us; till Malachi, the last of the Jewish prophets, and, consequently, the nearest to the time of Messiah, speaks out in the following awful language; “*But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?* for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. *And I will come near to you in judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the*

* 2 Cor. v. 10.

† James v. 9.

‡ Heb. x. 30.

*adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.** And again, “For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”†

And the forerunner of our Lord is even more explicit than any of the Jewish prophets, Malachi not excepted. To the pharisees and sadducees, who came to his baptism he said, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from *the wrath to come*? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.* I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: *whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but*

* Mal. iii. 2—5.

† Ibid. iv. 1.

*he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**

Thus, the nearer we approach the coming of Messiah, the more clearly do we find a day of future retribution revealed: a fact utterly unaccountable on the supposition, that this was a sanction peculiar to a covenant of works, and incompatible with the nature of a covenant of grace; but perfectly intelligible, if we consider the gospel as *the good news of Messiah's reign, and future retribution as the sanction by which the law of his kingdom is enforced.*

Nor is this all. Not only do we find the doctrine of future retribution more clearly revealed, the nearer we approach the day of Messiah's appearing; but we find it taught as *one of the grand distinctive peculiarities of that kingdom which he was to introduce and establish.* Both Malachi and John the Baptist are express and decisive in their testimony as to this point. And, doubtless, it was the salutary fear impressed upon the minds of his hearers by this great truth, which gave such effect to the preaching of the Baptist. "*The kingdom of God* was preached, and every man pressed into it."† Of this effect of his doctrine John himself was fully sensible, as appears by his address to those pharisees and sadducees who came to his baptism; "*O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*"‡

* Matt. iii. 7—12.

+ Luke xvi. 16.

‡ Matt. iii. 7.

plainly intimating, that the dread of future and eternal wrath was the grand engine, by which he had effected so mighty a reformation in the minds of his hearers.

When, therefore, we meet, either in the parables of Christ, or in the discourses or writings of his apostles, with denunciations of wrath against the finally impenitent, we are not to imagine that such denunciations belong only to the covenant of works; and, consequently, that a believer in Christ, being placed under another covenant, has no ground for apprehension, and is under no necessity of exercising fear, or caution, or watchfulness. These awful denunciations pertain to the very covenant under which he is placed; they are the sanctions of that very law which he is required to obey. So that were it possible that a believer in Christ could live in wilful contempt of the authority of that law, he would, by his disobedience to it, incur the awful penalty which it threatens to inflict on the transgressor of it; nor could he escape final perdition, unless divine grace should interpose, and recover him from the paths into which he had wandered. Such examples are not wanting of the triumphs of divine grace. It is at our peril, however, that we presume on like mercy being shewn to us. If we have examples of backsliders being restored, we have also examples of apostates who perished in their sins. If David and Peter hold out

encouragement to the penitent wanderer to return to God; a Judas, a Simon, a Demas, warn us of the danger of presumptuous transgression.

From what has been advanced, then, we may learn, that nothing but divine grace urging the believer in Christ to a determined resistance of his great spiritual adversary the devil, to habitual watchfulness against the inroads of temptation, to a daily mortification of his own inward corruptions, to a cheerful, steady, and unwearied compliance with the whole will of God, secures him from final perdition. This is a sentiment confirmed by every page of the New Testament. Not only do the numerous exhortations to watchfulness, godly jealousy over ourselves, the mortification of our sensual appetites, and a diligent and unwearied observance of the will of Christ, presuppose our danger of falling into final perdition; it is also presupposed by such exhortations as the following, which, indeed, can have no meaning on a contrary hypothesis; “*Destroy not* him by thy meat, for whom Christ died.”* “*For meat destroy not* the work of God.”† “But take heed, lest, by any means, this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. For, if any man see thee, which hast knowledge, sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those

* Rom. xiv. 15.

† Ibid. 20.

things which are offered to idols; and, through thy knowledge, shall the weak brother *perish*, for whom Christ died?"* Do not all these exhortations and expostulations proceed on the principle, that, to sin against Christ, is to incur the danger of final perdition? and that, to become the occasion of sin to our brethren in Christ is, as far as lies in our power, to destroy their souls? If no such danger be incurred, really the caution here inculcated is unnecessary.

That the apostles of Christ were apprehensive of such danger, is evident, from their anxious solicitude for the spiritual welfare of their converts. As one specimen among many, which I might adduce of this godly jealousy over them, I will refer the reader to St. Paul's tender and affectionate address to his Thessalonian converts; "Wherefore, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith; that no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, *lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.* But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and

* 1 Cor. viii. 9—11.

brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you; therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: for, now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."* This language, I venture to affirm, is perfectly unintelligible, if no departure from the faith and purity of the gospel incur a liability to final perdition; but is easy of explanation, if, on the other hand, the affirmative be true.

But this is not all; the New Testament abounds with direct and positive assertions of the fact I am labouring to establish; viz. that apostacy from the faith is the road to eternal perdition; and that every sin wilfully committed, is a step towards this awful consummation. Need I remind the reader of the argument of St. Paul, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians? "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. *But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were*

* 1 Thess. iii. 1—8.

our examples, (or ensamples to us) to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."* In this passage will be found a direct application of the doctrine above advanced, of the strict analogy which subsists between the Mosaic and Christian economies. Were it not for this analogy, there would be no propriety or force in the statement of the Apostle, that the judgments which befel the Israelites in the wilderness, "happened to them for *ensamples*." It is only by supposing a similarity, or rather, I should say, an identity, in the principle on which the kingdoms of Jehovah and of Christ are respectively administered, that any conclusion, like that which the Apostle here draws from the one to the other, could be supported. If, instead of similarity in the principle

* 1 Cor. x. 1—12.

of their respective administrations, there were a direct contrast and opposition between them, as is too commonly supposed, this inference would altogether fail, and a contrary conclusion would be far more just. It is not possible, I think, to devise a form of words more confirmatory of the position I am supporting, than those of St. Paul above quoted. Similar authorities might be adduced: but as it would not be possible to find one more decisive, and as merely to multiply them would add nothing to the strength of the argument, I will not trespass on the patience of my readers by a formal quotation of them, but request such as may be desirous of consulting analogous testimonies, to turn to the passages noted in the margin.*

Let it not be thought, however, from any thing which has been advanced, that there is no security whatever for the final salvation of the people of God. "My sheep shall never perish," says Christ, "neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."† Ample provision is made for their preservation from final apostacy. But that security does not arise from the total absence of danger; from the non-existence of a law obligatory on the believer, and enforced by the sanctions of judgment and eternal death. It is as true of the righteous, as it is of the wicked, of those who

* See Heb. iii. 7—19; iv. 1, 2, 11; x. 38; xii. 15—17. 2 Pet. ii. 1—9. Jude 5—7.

† John x. 28.

shall be finally saved, as of those who shall finally perish, that they shall be "*judged according to their works.*"* None shall enter the mansions of the blessed, whose works accord not with the rule of christian duty. "Behold," says Christ, "I come quickly; and my reward is with me, *to give every man according as his work shall be.* I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.* For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."† It was the firm impression of this truth, which led St. Paul to pray on behalf of his Thessalonian converts, that God would "*establish their hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*"‡ This led him so assiduously to "labour, that whether present or absent, he might be accepted of him."§ This led him to "keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away."||

O let not those who bear the name of Christ mistake on a point of such infinite importance. Let them not trust in a refuge of lies. Let them

* Rev. xx. 13. † Ib. xxii. 12—15. ‡ 1 Thes. iii. 13.

§ 2 Cor. v. 9.

|| 1 Cor. ix. 27.

not indulge in vain self-confidence, and imagine, that because they have been justified from the guilt of their former sins, no future conduct on their part can endanger their final safety. It is a delusive peace which springs from such a source as this; and tends, more than any other feeling of the mind, to plunge the soul in hopeless and irrecoverable ruin. Even with all the care, and caution, and watchfulness, which the best saint that ever lived has exerted against his subtle adversary, he has sometimes been foiled. This mighty foe of God's people has cast down many wounded, even when they have fought most manfully, and used the christian armour with greatest skill. And yet some fondly think, they may lay aside the shield, and the helmet, and the breastplate, and the sword, and attain heaven without a struggle with the great enemy. So thought not Paul. To his Ephesian converts he thus writes; "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, *that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, *that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.* Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and

having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, *wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked.* And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.*

It is one of the artifices of the subtle enemy of our salvation, if possible, to conceal from us his strength, that he may induce us to abate our vigilance, and throw aside our armour; and, when he has succeeded in producing in our minds a false security, he looks upon our ruin as more than half accomplished. Those, therefore, who teach men to despise their great adversary, are not the true friends of their salvation. They are "apostles of Satan transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." Beware, christian reader, how you listen to their lying doctrine. They would lull you to repose, as the false Delilah once did the mighty champion of Israel, that having first shorn you of your strength, they may then deliver you bound into the enemy's hands. "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird," † said the royal preacher. But alas! there are among the sons of men many who are more void of understanding than the fowls of heaven. The net

* Eph. vi. 10—18.

† Prov. i. 17.

of the fowler is spread in their very sight, and yet they cannot be persuaded that danger is nigh. They deem it a part of wisdom to be unsuspicious, and make it their boast that they dare sleep unarmed in the very presence of their foe. O that my feeble voice could arouse them to a just sense of their danger, lest they should lie down, and sleep the sleep of death.

Does it then become the christian soldier to cherish no assurance of his final salvation? Must he ever indulge the terrific dread of one day falling by the hand of his enemy? No, despondency equally misbecomes him as vain confidence, and is a feeling little less injurious in its tendency. Because his enemy is mighty, he is not to deem him resistless. That enemy would fain persuade those whom he cannot lull into security, that all resistance to his power will prove ineffectual. And so it would be, did the Christian contend against him in his own strength; but, aided as he is by omnipotence, the feeblest saint is more than a match for this potent adversary, though he come out against him like a roaring lion. Let the believer remember that the great Captain of his salvation has already "spoiled principalities and powers," that he has led "captivity captive;" and that he has engaged to make all his people "more than conquerors," and to "bruise Satan under their feet shortly." *

* Rom. xvi. 20.

Despond not, ye children of the most high God, because you are called to wrestle with the principalities and powers of darkness. Remember there is one “*who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.*”* “*To him commit the keeping of your souls in well-doing.*”† While you trust in his power, and wield his armour, and fight his battles, and continue manfully opposing your enemies, and wander neither to the right hand nor to the left, you have no fatal danger to fear. Your adversary the devil may come out against you as a roaring lion; but “resist him, and he will flee from you.”‡ Continue vigilant and circumspect, and self-diffident, and armed at every point with the armour which Christ has provided you, and you may dare him to do his worst. He cannot overcome you even by his most furious onsets, or mortally wound you even by his most fiery darts, while you steadily pursue the course marked out for you in God's word. It is when you slumber, or loiter, or relax your vigilance, or turn aside from the holy commandment, that he can surprise you. “Be sober” then, “be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the

* Jude 24.

† 1 Pet. iv. 19.

‡ James iv. 7.

world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."*

Some have represented the condition of a believer in the present life as one of perfect security, arising from the total absence of danger. But this is not the doctrine of the sacred scriptures; nor is it the way to do honour to the grace of God, or to the tender pity and watchful care of the good Shepherd. Supposing the children of God to be placed beyond the reach of danger, there is no need for the arm of omnipotence to be stretched out for their protection and defence. Supposing the sheep of Christ to be fed in pastures, into which no roaring lion or raging bear can have access to worry or to devour them, and there is no opportunity afforded for the exercise of vigilance on the part of the great Shepherd. The loving-kindness which God manifested to his servant David, was not expressed in placing him in a condition of absolute security from the violent rage of his bitter enemy, king Saul. No, it was in delivering him in the time of his extremity, at the very moment when Saul exulted in the thought of his certain destruction. "God hath delivered him into mine hand," said he; "for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars."†

* 1 Pet. v. 8—11.

† 1 Sam. xxiii. 7.

But God disappointed his cruel and murderous designs; and it is thus that David records his deliverance; "He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the Lord was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me. The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me."* And afterwards he adds, "For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall. It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hind's feet, and setteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms."† And similar deliverances may be gratefully recorded by all God's people in every age. Such was the miraculous preservation of the three children whom Nebuchadnezzar commanded to be cast into the burning fiery furnace; and of Daniel, when, for violating a crafty and impious decree, he was thrown into the den of lions. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that both the king of Babylon in the one instance, and the king of the Medes and Persians in the other, were brought by

* Psalm xviii. 16—20. † Ibid. 29, 32—34.

these very events to the acknowledgment of the true God. "I make a decree," said king Darius, "that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. *He delivereth and rescueth*, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, *who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.*"* And in the heavenly world it will be matter of eternal thanksgiving and praise, that, encompassed as the saints of God were, while sojourning on earth, with enemies more fierce and more cruel than even famished beasts of prey, they reached their father's home safe and unhurt.

The grace of God towards his people is not expressed, by placing them in a condition where no enemy can assault them; but in making them, feeble as they are in themselves, "*more than conquerors* through him who loved them." It is not expressed in giving them a discharge from the toils or dangers of the conflict; but in shielding their heads in the day of battle; in "teaching their hands to war and their fingers to fight;" in making them swift to flee, where safety is to be sought in flight, and strong to combat, where the enemy must be fairly met and vanquished. Sometimes indeed, to convince them where their safety

* Dan. vi. 26, 27.

lies, he may so entirely surround them with difficulties and dangers, that no exertions of theirs can surmount, and no wisdom of theirs can elude them; and they have no other resource left them, but to "stand still and see the salvation of God." But this is not the manner in which God most commonly interposes on behalf of his people. Their situation usually resembles that of the little army of Gideon advancing to the attack of the Midianitish camp. Nothing but the arm of omnipotence could enable them to vanquish those innumerable hosts of Midianites and Amalekites, who, to use the expressive language of sacred story, "covered the valley like grasshoppers for multitude." But yet God had determined that by the sword of Gideon he would work out deliverance for his people. The appointed watchword was, "The sword of the Lord *and of Gideon*."* And so it is with God's spiritual people. He not merely subdues their enemies; but he strengthens them to obtain the victory. He not merely vanquishes their great adversary the devil, but "he bruises Satan *under their feet*."† And this mode of interposition, though less striking to the senses, conveys to the mind a far more decisive proof of the majesty of divine power, than if he were wholly to exclude all human agency in carrying into effect his designs of mercy towards his people. And certainly it

* Judges vii. 18.

† Rom. xvi. 20.

inflicts more signal disgrace on the great enemy of God's people thus to be defeated, than had all the artillery of divine power been brought forward to secure his overthrow. If the pride of Satan could derive consolation, as our great poet has very naturally described him as doing, from the thought, that it was in a war against omnipotence only that he had been foiled, this miserable consolation will remain to him no longer. His victors are not God and his Messiah; it is the children of Adam, once his wretched and hopeless captives, who now trample him beneath their feet.

I put it to the candid and impartial reader, whether the representation I have above given be not more honourable to the grace of God, than any known modification of the Antinomian doctrine? Where, on that scheme, is any scope afforded for the exercise on the part of God, of patience, or forbearance, or long-suffering, or tender pity, or paternal care, or forgiving love, or renewing grace? What scope for the vigilance, or protecting arm of the great Shepherd of the sheep? Or what motive for the exercise of faith in God on the part of his people? It is impossible, I think, not to perceive, that, under pretence of doing honour to the grace of God, it reduces it to a total incapacity of actively exerting itself in the salvation of men, by leaving nothing for it to perform: that, under pretence of

exalting the Redeemer, it robs him of that exhaustless revenue of praise which would finally accrue to him from the safe conduct of his people to the realms of glory. Upon this miserable scheme nothing can be easier than the task which is now assigned him. That his sheep shall never perish, they owe not to his watchful care, or his almighty arm. His flock depasture, where no enemy can approach to devour them. O shameless advocates of so injurious a doctrine! Reflect but for a moment on its real tendency. It does nothing less than rob Christ of the honour of "bringing many sons" safe "to glory." To whatever they may owe their safety, it is not to him, if what you affirm be true. That blessed promise of the Saviour, the joy and comfort of all his redeemed people, for which they daily bless and magnify his name, "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand;"* this blessed promise, I say, you strip of all its value, by ascribing the security of the flock of Christ, not to his vigilance or power, but simply to some imaginary state of safety which wholly supersedes any necessity for their exertion.

Thus have I proved the position which I formerly advanced, that Antinomianism is as hostile to the honour of divine grace, as it is avowedly unfriendly to the interests of personal, vital and practical holiness; in short, that it raises the

* John x. 28.

cross of Christ only that it may the more effectually prostrate his throne, and not from any sincere regard to its true glory. And yet it has been chiefly by loud professions of zeal for Christ that it has gained such numerous accessions to its cause. The reader will now be able to judge what measure of confidence those professions deserve.

CONCLUSION.

FROM the remarks which have been made in the preceding chapters, the reader will be led to see wherein the true glory of that dispensation consists, under which it is his happy privilege to live. Rejecting with a holy indignation the impious sentiment, "Let us sin, that grace may abound," he will make it his boast that he is the "servant of Christ." Advancing no claims to exemption from divine authority, he will exult in the delightful thought, that the Sovereign whose will he is bound to consult, whose laws he is required to obey, and at whose tribunal he must one day stand, is he who once died for his sins, and then rose again for his justification; in short, that his Redeemer and Saviour is his Lord and Judge.

It is this truth, and this alone, which St. Paul expresses in those well-known words, "Ye are not under law, but under grace;" that is to say, as I have before observed, Ye are not under a dispensation of law, the distinctive characteristic of which is rigid and inflexible justice; which affords no other aid for the discharge of duty than the simple revelation of the divine will; and which

knows not to forgive, when once its requisitions have been broken and violated. No; the kingdom of the glorified Jesus, of which you are the privileged subjects, is administered on milder and more gracious principles. Making provision at once for assisting our weakness, and pardoning our daily provocations, it meets every possible exigence of our fallen nature; while, by its commands and its prohibitions, its promises and its threatenings, it urges us to seek after greater, and still greater degrees of conformity to the image and will of God. And what can a child of God desire more? Nothing but an invincible attachment to sin, and a fixed determination to indulge in it, in spite of all its consequences, can for one moment induce a wish, that the prohibitions and threatenings of the word of God were expunged from the sacred page. Is it not enough that we live under the mild and gentle reign of the Son of God, who knows and who pities the infirmities of our nature, who intercedes for our forgiveness when we go astray from his ways, and who, by the mighty agency of his Spirit, conquers and subdues the inbred corruptions of our hearts, and transforms us enemies into the likeness of sons;—Is not this, I ask, enough to satisfy us, but we must contend for absolute exemption from moral obligation and final accountability? must live as we list, and pass into heaven without undergoing any scrutiny from the searching eye of the great

Judge? Such is not the grace revealed to us in the gospel of Christ. The good news it proclaims to perishing sinners is good news concerning God's everlasting kingdom; and he whose heart has been broken with genuine contrition, when he hears these glad tidings proclaimed, will hasten to offer his submission to the King whom God hath "set upon his holy hill of Zion;" rejoicing that the sinful sons of men are invited to renew their allegiance, and to serve their God in the person of his only begotten Son.

THE END.

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their allegiance, and to serve that God in the
person of his only begotten Son.

CORRIGENDA.

Page 45, fourth line from the bottom, for here is, read there is.

58, third line from the bottom, before proclaims, insert the Lord.

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